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THE GOLDEN GOAT

By Helen Hill and Violet Maxwell



THE GOLDEN GOAT

LITTLE TONINO

CHARLIE AND HIS KITTEN TOPSY

CHARLIE AND HIS PUPPY BINGO

CHARLIE AND HIS COAST GUARDS

CHARLIE AND THE SURPRISE HOUSE

CHARLIE AND HIS FRIENDS



THE GOATS WATCHED MIETTO DANCING

THE GOLDEN GOAT

BY

HELEN HILL

AND

VIOLET MAXWELL

ILLUSTRATED BY THE AUTHORS

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CHAPTER I

THE SUNLESS VALLEY

Once upon a time there was a walled city built in a valley in the mountains that rise up from the sea in the south-eastern part of Provence. To the north these mountains tower higher and higher, one above the other, till they are so high that their tops are covered with snow even in the summer.

As everybody knows, a city built in a valley surrounded by high mountains will never get as much sunshine as a city built on a plain, because the sun rises later behind the mountains and sets earlier. But in the little city of Rouchoun the sun shone only a few hours every day, even in mid-summer; and from the twenty-first of October till the twenty-first of February the people who lived in Rouchoun did not see the sun at all. It was a gray twilight all day long.

The reason for that was the Rouchoun du Géant, which crowned the mountain to the south and stood up stark and sheer against the sky. It was an enormous limestone rock and its shadow lay on the valley all winter long. It was only in summer, when the sun moved around toward the north, that the sun shone at all on the city of Rouchoun.

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Of course very little grew in the valley and even in the farm lands on the slopes of the mountains the harvest never came to full maturity. The apples were sour and green, with very little substance to them, the turnips and the carrots were fibrous and dry and the onions were very small and never very good. Juicy green vegetables, peaches and grapes—they were absolutely unknown in that valley!

There was very little forest, too, in the hills near Rouchoun. Wood and charcoal cost a great deal and were hard to get, though they were needed so much there where the winters were long and cold. And as for the cattle, the cows were skinny and gave very little milk, and the little that they gave was thin and blue with no cream at all, while the donkeys and the goats were just as miserable as the cows.

In fact Rouchoun was a very sad place to live in, and how in the world the first settlers ever came to build their city in such a dismal valley is a mystery. Of course there were legends to explain it, which the old men of the town used to tell each other in the long summer evenings, when they sat together in the big square in front of the count's castle.

Some said that their ancestors had once lived in a beautiful city far to the south, until one sad day the Saracens had arrived in their pirate ships, burning and pillaging. All who could escape fled before them toward the moun-

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tains and never stopped till they found this hidden valley with the great towering rock that shut them off completely from any enemy approaching from the sea. And here they had built their city, without any thought that the great rock might also shut them off from the sun!

Others said that their city had always been there from time immemorial, but that in earlier days the mountain to the south had been smooth and flat on the top, with a marvelous upland grazing ground for cattle. Those were the days when giants and dragons still wandered on the earth and were a great danger and trial to human folk. Then one day came the great Hercules and vowed to exterminate the giants. They all thronged to meet him and there was a terrific battle. The giants tore rocks out of the ground and hurled them at Hercules, who flung them back with unerring aim, each time wounding a giant in some vital spot, until all were exterminated save one.

This last giant was standing on the top of the mountain flinging rocks down on Hercules, who stood in the valley. Hercules was tired, for he had fought all day and he had no longer the strength to raise his arms. So at last Jupiter, afraid that his beloved Hercules would be killed, came to his assistance and let an enormous rock fall down from Olympus which crushed the giant beneath it. And there the Rouchoun du Géant, as the great cliff was called, had remained ever since.

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Whatever the reason, the city was there—and there generations and generations of people had been born and grown up and had children born to them in that gloomy sunless valley. They had tilled their ground and planted their seeds in the brief summer months, and had harvested their miserable crops and never known what it was to have quite enough to eat or to enjoy the sweetness of flowers and fruit, and the music of birds.

Of course nothing would have grown at all if the peasants had not worked all day and half the night during the summer. In the valley itself there were no wild flowers growing and the peasants would have thought it a terrible waste of time to give any attention to growing flowers when they needed all their energy to produce enough food to keep themselves alive.

Naturally enough nobody was very happy who lived in Rouchoun; but they did not know they were unhappy, though it would be hard to imagine a more dreary and melancholy set of people. Nobody ever danced or sang or laughed or made merry. They worked hard from morning to night, in the summer farming their lands and in the winter digging in the mountains for crystals. Traveling peddlers bought the crystals from them and they were made into beautiful necklaces and bracelets and brooches for happier people who lived in places where the sun shines

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both in the summer and in the winter. When the people of Rouchoun had done their day's work, and had eaten their meager suppers in their cold, dark kitchens, they usually went to bed right away; for there at least they were warm and comfortable and could go to sleep and forget that they were always a little bit hungry.

Even on the great festival of the year, the festival which was more important to them than Christmas or Easter, the day when the sun first appeared after it had not shone on them for four months, the citizens of Rouchoun no longer feasted and made merry. It is true that they still built a bonfire on the eve of that day in front of a little chapel on the slope of the hill above the town, on the other side of the valley. And on the twenty-first of February itself the whole city, dressed in its best, would follow the priests and acolytes in solemn procession to the chapel; and, just at the moment that the sun appeared behind the rock, the priest would set light to the bonfire and the congregation would greet the sun with hymns and chants. Then the priest would pray for a good harvest—and that was the end of it! Back they would all troop to the city and each one go about his business.

In olden times, before the people had become so dreary and melancholy, feasting and dancing had followed the ceremony of the bonfire. They had all been so glad to

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see the sun again after the long months of darkness that they had let themselves go in a riot of dancing and rejoicing.



But those days had long passed. Now the people of Rouchoun no longer felt the least thrill when they saw the

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sun appear again. They realized of course that without its warm rays they would not have any harvest at all; but they had learned to rather dislike the glare of sunlight, just as they had learned to prefer dark colors to bright ones.



And in the summer they always kept their shutters closed so as to keep the sun out of their houses!

Bit by bit the idea had arisen that after all it was hardly proper or well-bred to laugh and to play and to dance and

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enjoy life, and the richer and more important citizens were also the dreariest and the most melancholy. So it happened that, of all the people of Rouchoun, the Count and the Countess de Rouchoun, who lived in the magnificent castle on one side of the city square, were the dreariest and most melancholy of all. Of course they *never* laughed, they never even smiled!

One day the count was sitting in his study, figuring how much he would get for his share of the crystals and amber that the workmen of the town had found in the mountains the winter before. He liked to count over the shining golden *louis d'or* that the peddlers from the south paid for the crystals. It was surprising that he was so fond of money, considering how little use he made of it. The countess sat in her room with her ladies, sewing on a black velvet dress. And the three little counts, Louvis, Guibert and Léoun, sat in the nursery doing absolutely nothing at all.

They all looked most gloomy and sad; their eyebrows were screwed together in a solemn frown and the corners of their mouths were turned down. They were not gloomy and sad because they had nothing to do—no, their eyebrows were screwed together and their mouths were turned down because that was their natural expression.

In one corner of the nursery was a cradle and in the cradle lay the baby Countess Mietto. Mietto had been

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born only a few months before. Her hair was golden instead of black like her brothers', and her eyes were bright blue, but she looked just as gloomy and discontented as they did. Her eyebrows were also screwed together and the corners of her mouth turned down. Beside the cradle sat a very cross and disagreeable-looking nurse.

It happened that Mietto had never yet seen the sun, because, as I have told you, the citizens of Rouchoun always kept their shutters tight closed during the summer. But on this particular day the nurse had been careless and left a little chink through which a shaft of sunlight presently came shining in, straight across the room to where the baby Mietto was lying in her cradle, and lighted just on the tip of her nose! Mietto's eyes crinkled and the corners of her mouth turned up, and she kicked up her toes and she grabbed at the sunbeam with her hands—and she began to laugh!

The nurse was horrified. Never had she heard such a shocking sound from any of her nurselings! She picked Mietto up and shook her gently, but it only made her laugh the more. The nurse was so worried that she carried the baby down to the countess's room, and the countess was just as worried and agitated as the nurse had been. It was so inexplicable—none of her other children ever dreamed of laughing, even now that they were three and

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five and seven years old. Much less had they thought of laughing when they were tiny babies lying in a cradle!

Well, the count and the countess sent for the physician, and he examined Mietto and he shook his head gravely and suggested this remedy and that—but all to no avail; Mietto continued to laugh whenever she felt like it. And she often felt like it, for ever so many things seemed to amuse Mietto—not only the sight and feel of a sunbeam, but also the flash of her mother's needle or the sparkle of the crystals in her father's study; and sounds made her laugh too—the sound of the handmaids beating the rugs in the courtyard below and drawing the water up with a clanking chain from the well in the center of the court.

The count and the countess then consulted the alchemist, who was also the small counts' tutor, and *he* consulted the stars; but after deep study he pronounced that there was absolutely nothing to be done about it. Mietto had been born under an unfortunate conjunction of the stars, with the sun in Leo—and they must just make the best of it.

So Mietto laughed and chuckled her way through babyhood. And from a cheerful, jolly baby she grew into a cheerful, jolly little girl, who was always laughing and joking and trying hard to make everybody in the castle as cheerful and as gay as she was herself.

But when people are of a morose and gloomy disposition they have no desire to be cheered up, so Mietto's efforts

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were all in vain. Her father was always busy at his accounts or interviewing the steward of his domains, her mother liked above all things silence and decorum and was always a little uneasy when Mietto was in the same room with her.

As for her brothers, Louvis, Guibert and Léoun, except for a short ride that they took every day on their ponies accompanied by a groom, they were always immersed in their books and their experiments under the tutelage of Messer Tourbassin, who was instructing them in the mysteries of chemistry and alchemy. They hoped eventually, through their united efforts, to find some substance that would produce warmth of itself, and cause things to grow in spite of the absence of the sun.

As soon as Mietto was old enough to run around by herself, she would often slip out of the castle door and wander across the square alone and visit the shops and talk to the shopkeepers, who, though they were scandalized by her behavior, were always glad to see her. She decided that, although by no means what one would call cheerful, they were far better company than the people in the castle, especially Messer Devous, the blacksmith, and Dame Magala, the cheese-maker.

Messer Devous was a tall, powerful man, who sat all day long in front of the cheerful glow of his forge; and, as he beat the iron on the anvil, he was wont to sing to the tune

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of the clanging. It was true he sang very softly, almost under his breath as if he were half ashamed, but still he *did* sing and Mietto loved to listen to him.



Dame Magala lived in a little house by the postern gate and owned seven goats. She made the most delicious goat's-

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milk cheeses. Twice a week she would bring them to market wrapped, each one, in a linen cloth that she had spun and woven herself; and people would throng to buy her cheeses for, though other people made cheese of goat's milk, Dame Magala's cheese surpassed them all.

The first time Mietto saw her she was attracted by a kerchief of a pretty scarlet, with yellow and blue flowers on it, that Dame Magala was wearing. It was also the first time Mietto had ever seen anything so bright and gay, so she ran over to look at it closer and admire it. Mietto soon became fast friends with the cheese-maker, who was not at all like the other townspeople of Rouchoun. It is true that she had been born there and lived there all her life, but her father and mother had hailed from another town in the mountains to the south.

They had come to live in Rouchoun because they had heard how much gold could be earned by digging for the crystals for which the town was famous. But Dame Magala's mother had regretted it for, though they had been poorer in their little home in the southern village, they had been happier. Mietto loved to hear the stories and songs that Dame Magala had learned from her mother. Whenever she could Mietto would run away from the castle on a market day and sit in the sun beside the cheese stall and listen to the stories that the old cheese-maker loved to tell her.

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For Dame Magala also loved the sun and never dreamed of shutting the shutters of her house in the summer, as was the custom in Rouchoun. No, her place in the shady little market square was always the one where there was a patch of sunlight. And no one disputed her place, for of course that was the spot avoided by all the other market people.

CHAPTER II

DAME MAGALA'S GOATS

Even Mietto, born in that conjunction between the sun and Leo which her parents thought so unfortunate, found it difficult to be always gay and happy during the long winter months when the sun never shone and the streets of Rouchoun were dark and damp. Her mother's chamber, where she was expected to sit and learn to sew, was gloomy too, lit as it was by a few flickering candles. The hours seemed to stretch interminably. Neither the countess nor her ladies wasted any time in talking; they stitched on and on in a heavy silence and answered Mietto's attempts to start a conversation with a bored "yes" or "no."

Of course, being Mietto, she did have occasional bursts of high spirits when she would jump down the big staircase two steps at a time and run along the corridors as fast as she could from one end to the other. And the countess would sigh at the sound of her scampering feet, and her ladies would glance at each other and raise their eyebrows.

Mietto loved her brothers. And how she wished that they would play with her sometimes; what fun they could have had chasing each other all over the big castle and

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playing hide and seek in the big empty upper rooms! But Louvis, Guibert, and even little Léoun were quite contented



to spend the day studying their fat treatises on chemistry under the guidance of Messer Tourbassin, the alchemist.

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They would not have cared at all to go rushing aimlessly about with their little scatter-brained sister.

Once, however, the twenty-first of February arrived, bringing with it the sun, though only for a brief hour at first each day, Mietto was absolutely happy again. How she loved that day! In the morning she would wake up and see her best dress laid out on the chair beside her bed, though it was not a Sunday. Then her nurse would come to tell her it was time to rise, and she would dress her and lace her velvet corselet, and Mietto would go down to the breakfast table to find her father and her mother and her brothers looking less gloomy than usual in their fine silk and velvet clothes. After breakfast they would walk together across the square to the church, where the priest and the acolytes were waiting, the priest clad in a beautiful golden cope and the acolytes dressed in bright scarlet.

It was such fun walking in procession up to the chapel where the bonfire was already laid and waiting there in hushed expectation, every eye fixed on the great rock. Mietto always had a secret fear that perhaps *this* year the sun might not appear. And when—just as the priest bent forward, lighted taper in hand—the first tip of the great golden ball appeared, Mietto sometimes could not suppress a shout of joy, so that the congregation would turn and look at her in scandalized amazement. She would

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sing the chants and the hymns so vigorously that she put everybody out!

That was the beginning of the happy time of the year. The city that had seemed so deserted and lifeless would awaken; the men who had been digging for amber and crystals in the mountains, and the women who had spent



the winter months in their houses, huddled over their fires, now climbed every morning to their farms on the hillsides. And soon, along the road that led through the valley and disappeared in a notch between two mountains, the peddlers would begin to arrive from the south.

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Watching from a castle window, Mietto would see a long procession of men and donkeys, and she would escape from her nurse and run down to the city gate to welcome them. They were so merry and gay and always bowed to her and called out "good day" as they passed her. She loved their little fat donkeys, too, with their panniers hanging from either side of their backs, full of the peddlers' merchandise.

She loved to follow them to the square and watch them setting up their booths and arranging their wares—pots and pans of copper and tinware, pottery bowls and pitchers, and bales of cotton and silk and wool, the gayly colored ones underneath and the dark-brown and plum-colored ones on top, because by now the peddlers knew the tastes of the people of Rouchoun. It is true that now and again one of the peddlers would hang up a tempting array of bright-colored ribbons, but that was for his own artistic pleasure, for no one in Rouchoun would dream of wasting money on such useless gewgaws. But you may be sure that Mietto loved them and was not content till she had spent all her pennies on yellow or scarlet ribbons that would be of no use to her as she would never be allowed to wear them.

The quips and the jokes of the peddlers delighted her, at least, though they met with little response from the townspeople whom they addressed. And in the evening, when the peddlers gathered outside the blacksmith's forge, where a fire always burned cheerfully, to eat their evening

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meal and gossip and chat the while, Mietto could hardly bear to leave them to return to the castle even though she knew that she would meet with severe reproof for returning late.

These men from the south did not hide their opinion of Rouchoun. "How human beings can live in such a dreary, dismal spot! Where the sun never shines at all for four whole months of the year, and where even in midsummer it has already set by six in the afternoon!"

Then they would tell of the lands to the south, where the sun shone all day even in winter, and in summer rose at four in the morning and didn't dream of going to bed till nearly nine o'clock at night. And during all those hours it was helping the good things of the earth to grow—ripening the wheat, painting the bloom on the grapes in the vineyards, sprinkling the fields with flowers, making the peaches, the nectarines, the cherries sweet and juicy.

Mietto would listen entranced, though most of these fruits were unknown to her except in the songs and stories that Dame Magala had told her. Apples were the only fruit she knew, and they were always hard and green. One day a peddler gave her an apple from the south lands to eat, a beautiful, red, juicy apple—why, it was delicious; Mietto could hardly believe that it was the same fruit.

To think that it was the sun that had made all that difference! She wished that the sun would only shine in this

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mountain valley as it did in those magic lands to the south ! It seemed as though Mietto could never get enough of the sunlight, she loved it so. Even in the longest days of summer, when the sun set far to the north, Mietto would often look up at the great Rock of the Giant, still bathed in the sun for hours after the city was in twilight, and wish that she could climb up and play in that band of golden light.

It was not, however, till Mietto was ten years old that she climbed for the first time to the top of the mountain beside the rock. The count and the countess would not allow her to go up there all by herself and she could not prevail on any of her brothers to go with her. Not only did they see no sense in making that steep climb in the heat of the sun, but I suspect that also they were a little afraid. There was a superstition among the people of Rouchoun that it was not at all safe to wander around the tops of the mountains, for one might meet with pixies or matagons, who would be quite capable of leading one a dance over peak and valley till one finally stumbled over a precipice.

Matagons especially were to be avoided, because, while pixies can be recognized at sight, matagons can take any shape they like, that of dogs or goats or even human beings ; and if you are careless and address them you land in their power and they can work their will on you. As it is well known, the people of Rouchoun argued, that the matagons

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and pixies make their homes in caves and among the stones on the tops of the mountains, how exceedingly foolhardy it would be to court the danger of meeting them by climbing up there!

So the people of Rouchoun did not even pasture their animals in the higher upland pastures, though, as the sun shone both earlier and later there than down in the valley, the grass was much thicker and better. But they did not care to take the risk for the sake of their cattle. So their cows and goats and donkeys and sheep were kept in the stables under the houses and fed on the hay which they cut and harvested themselves, instead of letting them graze.

There was only one person in the city who ever thought of pasturing her goats on the hillside above the line where the cultivated farms ended, and that was Dame Magala—which of course explains the superiority of her cheeses! But one winter poor Dame Magala suffered grievously with rheumatism and, even after the twenty-first of February brought the sun again to Rouchoun, she was still almost bent double with it. Impossible for her to climb up the steep hillside with her goats, and spend the day chasing after them when they strayed too far afield! There was nothing for her to do but keep them in the stable beside her house and feed them hay as everybody else did.

She told her troubles to Mietto, who felt very sorry for Dame Magala but almost as sorry for the poor goats; she

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knew how much they would hate to be shut up in a dark stable all day long, when they were accustomed to wandering around the mountain tops in the sunlight.

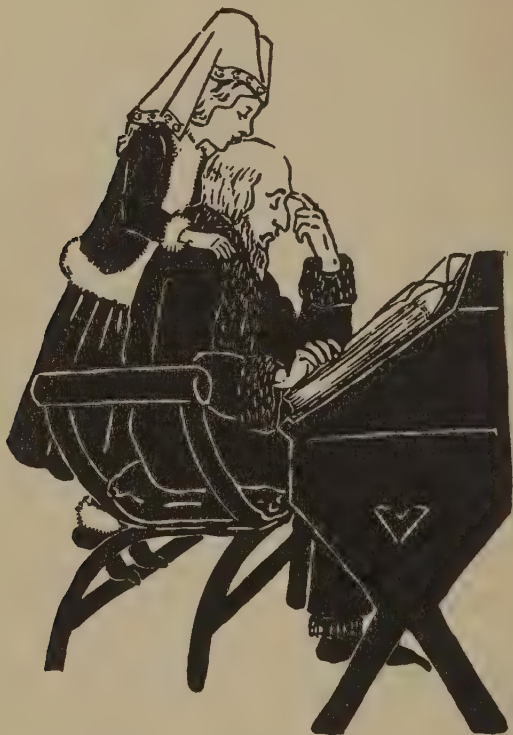
As soon as she could return to the castle she ran to her mother's chamber, where she sat, as always, sewing with her ladies. The poor countess looked up with a frown when Mietto came dashing into the room, her golden hair flying, her cheeks pink with excitement, and looking altogether so utterly different from everybody else that it was hardly—yes, hardly respectable!

Mietto flung her arms around her mother's neck, disarranging her veil and pushing her headdress to one side, and said: "Oh, Mother, *may* I pasture the goats for Dame Magala? Her rheumatism is so bad that she can't climb up the mountains any more, and all the stupid boys and girls are afraid to take them to the pastures though she has offered to pay them well. I am so sorry for the poor goats shut up in the stables now that the sun has come again, and Dame Magala says that they won't give nearly such good milk! And oh, Mother, I would so love to do it. I don't believe there are any matagons and I know they wouldn't hurt me even if there are. . . ."

The countess gently pushed Mietto away and said in a languid voice: "Don't bother me, child. Ask your father." Of course for any ordinary little countess it would be unthinkable that she should pasture the goats for an old

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peasant woman, but Mietto was not an ordinary little countess at all—and her mother had begun to grow accus-



tomed to her vagaries, though she could not but deplore them.

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So Mietto ran down to her father's counting room, where, as usual, he was busy with his books and paid no attention to her at all till she kissed him on the top of his bald head. "Dear Father," she said, "I have a boon to ask of you. You know Dame Magala who lives by the postern gate and sells delicious goat's-milk cheeses. They are so delicious because she pastures her goats on the mountain side where the grass is green and thick and that makes them give richer milk. But now she cannot do it any more because she is crippled with rheumatism, nor can she get anybody else to do it for her. But I would gladly do it for her if you would only give your permission. I promise that I will take my book with me every day and faithfully learn my lesson. . . . And think, dear Father, how sorry you would be if Dame Magala could no longer make her delicious cheeses, which you always enjoy so much!"

Well, perhaps it was that last remark that settled it—for the count was undoubtedly very fond of Dame Magala's cheeses, which were about the only really good things to eat that could be bought in Rouchoun. So he and the countess conferred together and decided that, as they could not alter Mietto's nature, they might as well put up with it and let her do as she pleased. Perhaps, also, the countess secretly felt that it would be a relief to her to be rid of her turbulent, disturbing little daughter for a few hours a day—for the sound of Mietto's singing and dancing along the

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corridors of the castle was always reminding her how different her daughter was from the staid and dignified little person that a young Countess of Rouchoun should be.

Whatever the reason, they finally gave their permission and said that Mietto could pasture Dame Magala's goats, as long as she was faithful in keeping her promise of sewing her stint every day and learning her page of wise maxims. Mietto was indeed overflowing with joy when one morning with her basket in her hand containing the shirt she was sewing for her brother Louvis wrapped in a clean towel, her book of maxims and some bread and cheese for her lunch, she arrived at Dame Magala's house by the postern gate.

Although it was already nine o'clock in the morning, the sun had not yet reached the city, but she could see it shining on the great rock, making the crystals embedded in it shine like diamonds. She climbed up and up between the terraced farms, the seven goats climbing before her, until at last she passed the last cultivated field. The ground was covered with big gray stones which made very difficult walking; but, when she reached the pasture on a shelf of the mountain below a fringe of rocky cliff that led up to the enormous Rouchoun du Géant, she found great tufts of a thick green grass growing and also clumps of rosemary and wild thyme, covered with pale lavender blossoms that smelt delightful. These were evidently the flowers that the peddlers had told her of, she decided; but she could not

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understand how they came to grow here in this wild rocky soil where no human hand had planted or tended them.

She wandered around at first touching each separate clump but picking very few flowers, for it seemed wrong, somehow, to rob the gallant little plants of their blossoms. The air was very pure and exhilarating and Mietto had never felt so happy in her life before—it seemed hard to settle down to her book and her task of needlework when there was so much to see and explore. But she had promised her father and her mother, and she hoped that, if she could show a neat and straight seam and recite a whole page of maxims by heart, they would continue to allow her to pasture Dame Magala's goats all summer. It was certainly easier to ply her needle up in the sweet mountain air than when sitting in her mother's chamber, surrounded by her ladies, all sewing in a deep and gloomy silence.

At last the seam was finished and the ballad learned by heart, and Mietto had the rest of the short day to enjoy herself freely. She chanted her maxims over and over again, so that she would be sure to remember them, and, as she chanted, she danced this way and that and round and round. It is difficult to dance while you are chanting serious pieces, so at first Mietto's steps were slow and stately. Then she tried a song that she had learned from the blacksmith; but his tunes were too slow for her too, and soon she found herself humming the gay little airs that the

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peddlers from the south were wont to sing. As she hummed and danced it seemed to her that she could hear the sound of the tunes played on a reed pipe as one of the peddlers had played them.

Mietto's feet flew faster and faster as she whirled around, until she was so tired that she flung herself on a cushion of wild thyme—oh, it was glorious fun! The day passed so quickly that she could hardly believe it when she noticed that the sun was already beginning to sink behind the mountains to the west. It was time to call her goats and go home.

But that was no easy task. The goats did not want to go home; they were enjoying themselves as much as Mietto and they would not come when they were called. She was thankful then for the high cliff that stopped their wandering over the top of the mountain to the valley beyond. But always, when Mietto approached them and called them, they bounded away. The sun disappeared behind the mountains and Mietto knew that, if she could not soon return to the castle, her parents would never permit her to herd the goats again.

Suddenly she saw a stranger goat clambering down the sheer side of the Rouchoun du Géant. He was much bigger than Dame Magala's goats and, instead of being white as they were, he seemed to be of a rather drab yellow color. He bounded after the truant goats, headed them off and

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chased them back to Mietto; then he herded them together and led them down the mountain side till they reached the little path that ran between the farms to the city. There he stopped and let the other goats pass him along the path they knew so well.

Mietto turned to thank him, but he leaped away and the last she saw of him he had clambered to the top of the cliff and disappeared on the other side.

CHAPTER III

THE VISIT OF THE TROUBADOUR

All through the summer Mietto herded the goats for Dame Magala. She finished three fine linen shirts for her brothers, Louvis, Guibert and Léoun, and even her mother had to admit that her stitches were small and even. And every day she learned a page of maxims or one of Æsop's fables to recite to her father in the evening.

Her parents congratulated themselves. "Surely Mietto is growing more quiet and decorous," they said. Though what they would have thought, I cannot tell, could they have seen her on the upland pastures, a wreath of rosemary on her head, as she danced, now fast, now slow with measured steps, now whirling round and round as she sang one of the gay and jolly tunes that she had learned from the peddlers.

For Mietto had really taught herself to dance in those long sunny hours, all alone except for the goats. When she had finished her daily tasks she would throw off the long, heavy robe which it was considered decorous for a young Countess of Rouchoun to wear, and dance in her white shift and purple kirtle and corselet. She invented steps for herself and danced them again and again till she

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could never forget them. And these steps described the song that she was singing—so that it was like a picture illustrating it.

The goats knew Mietto now and usually answered her call in the evening when it was time to lead them home. But whenever a goat refused to obey Mietto's call, preferring to graze a succulent tuft of green grass high up among the rocks, the stranger goat appeared again and, herding them all together, led them down to the path that began where the highest tilled fields ended. Mietto often tried to approach him, to pet him and show him her gratitude; she even hoped to cajole him to follow her to the city, where he would find a comfortable bed of straw in a corner of Dame Magala's stable. But the stranger goat would not even let her touch him; always he tossed his head and curvetted to one side, and as soon as they reached the path he would bound away up the mountain.

At last the summer was ended and the winter began to close in. The sun rose now only a little east of the Rouchoun du Géant and soon disappeared behind the great rock which cast its black shadow on the city. It was useless now for Mietto to pasture the goats, to lead them up to the high pastures only to bring them down again when the short hour of sunlight had ended.

Instead Mietto sat in her mother's room and sewed interminably, either in a deep silence or, which was worse,

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listening to the laments of the Lady Isabelle, the oldest and the only talkative one of the countess's ladies. And how much better it would have been if she, too, had been silent, for when she talked it was only to make disagreeable comments on the behavior of others or to complain of the cold or of the stupidity of the handmaids.

Poor Mietto felt restless and unhappy, she did so miss the long sunny hours on the uplands when she was free and light-hearted and happy. She missed her dancing, too, and she no longer felt any inclination to dance along the corridors of the castle, now that she knew what it was to dance on soft springy grass, with the sun shining warm upon her head. She also missed the peddlers and their talk of other lands; and, whenever she could escape from her needlework or studies, she would run off to Dame Magala's house near the postern gate and spend a happy hour with her, listening to her stories.

One day, looking out of an upper window of the castle, Mietto saw two lone figures approaching along the road from the narrow defile through which in summer the peddlers came with their donkeys and their packs. But never before had Mietto known any stranger to come near the city in the winter. Besides, the two little figures in the distance were mounted on horseback, which was a very unusual sight indeed.

She waited impatiently while the riders came nearer and

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nearer; she would have liked to run to meet them at the gate as she always did when she saw the peddlers arrive, but for some reason she felt shy. At last they reached the city gate and she lost sight of them. Then Mietto ran down the stairs to the audience chamber which looked out on the square. She knew that sooner or later whoever came to Rouchoun would find his way to the square; for it was in the heart of the city, where the church stood opposite the castle. There were the market and the hucksters' booths, and the only inn that Rouchoun possessed.

And, sure enough, in a little while she saw them emerge from one of the cavern-like streets and cross the square to the big gate that opened into the castle courtyard. They were indeed two amazing figures, unlike anybody that Mietto had ever seen before. The one who rode behind on a little palfrey wore a purple doublet and brown hose, with a scarlet cape, and he carried a harp. But it was the man riding on the chestnut charger who most aroused Mietto's astonishment and admiration—he was dressed in parti-colored hose of blue and orange, with blue doublet and cape and a cap with a long white feather. This was the usual dress of courtiers and nobles of that day, but Mietto had never seen any courtiers or nobles except those who lived in her father's castle.

The Count of Rouchoun had long given up intercourse with the nobles of his rank who lived in the splendid castles

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in the near-by mountain towns and villages. He did not care for the gay and light-hearted lives they led, with their numerous feasts and music and dances. He preferred his own gloomy castle.

The man on the palfrey dismounted and gave a clanging ring to the big bell outside the castle gate, which made his master's horse curvet and caracole. One of the men at arms hastened to answer the clang and open the gate, and Mietto was amazed to see him bow low and usher the strangers in.

A few minutes later her nurse opened the door. "I have searched for you everywhere," she said. "There are guests arrived at the castle and your lady mother desires that you array yourself in your best."

This was unprecedented and Mietto was full of questions, which from previous experience she knew would be likely to remain unanswered. But her nurse was so excited and full of importance with her knowledge of this unusual event that she unbent a little. It appeared that the stranger was a troubadour, *Sieur Gervais de Pontaves*, on his way to the court of the Count of Turin, and he had begged hospitality for the night.

Now the troubadours of those days were poets and musicians. Some of them were permanently attached to the courts of the great nobles, where they were treated with homage and consideration; others traveled from castle to

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castle, and their advent was always hailed with enthusiasm. Feasts and tourneys were held in their honor and, in return, they gladdened the company with the songs they had composed.

The Count de Rouchoun, in spite of his hermit-like disposition, was a great and wealthy noble and keenly alive to the duties of his position. Though in his castle he kept no great court and his retinue was small, and though he did not care himself for music or songs or the poets who composed them, he realized that it would be a slur on his noble name were he to fail to offer due honor to so important a troubadour as *Sieur Gervais de Pontaves* must be, since he was attached to the court of the powerful Count of Turin.

The cooks in the kitchen were ordered to prepare a feast with the best that could be obtained in Rouchoun. The stewards were ordered to bring up the best wine from the cellars of the castle, and messengers were dispatched to invite the most important citizens of Rouchoun to the feast, *Mietto's* old nurse told her, as she laced up the plum-colored velvet corselet of her best gown and arranged the high head-dress and veil which served to hide the unseemly brightness of her golden hair.

Mietto was too excited to stand still. She yearned to go down to her father's cabinet where he was doubtless entertaining the stranger, but she did not quite dare to.

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So it was not till the guests had arrived and the festive dinner was served that he was presented to her.



It was a strange gathering, and *Sieur de Pontaves* must have been greatly puzzled by his hosts and the guests. All

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were dressed in black or dark-colored garments of rich material but old-fashioned in cut and sadly creased, for it was not often that these festive robes were taken out of the big oak chests where they were commonly stored away. Everyone looked solemn and sad, although morosely courteous to the stranger, who seemed very out of place in his brilliant tunic and hose and with his vivid, happy young face.

Mietto could not take her eyes off him and she listened to every word he said. Of course he did not notice her, except to bow low when he was presented, for she was only a little girl. At first he talked eagerly to those around him, touching on the gossip of the courts that he had recently visited, telling this anecdote and that, with many a sparkling jest, or referring to the latest ballad written by some famous troubadour.

But while he spoke his eyes traveled from bored face to bored face and soon he felt embarrassed and ill at ease. These people were all so utterly indifferent to what he said; it was the first time in his courted life that he had failed to please. Soon he fell silent, and the other guests with a sigh of relief gave all their attention to the dinner which so far excelled the meager fare they were accustomed to.

After the feast was over, the great silver dishes and goblets were borne away and the cloth removed, last the boards and trestles on which the feast had been spread were

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carried by the serving men from the great audience chamber. Then Sieur Gervais took his harp from his varlet's hands and began to play—half-heartedly at first. The gloom of the company had served to damp his usual high spirits. But now for the first time he really noticed Mietto as she sat at her father's feet, her cheeks pink with excitement, her eyes fixed glowingly on his face.

Sieur Gervais de Pontaves began to play and sing for her alone—songs that she might understand. He sang of the vineyards and flower gardens of the south lying in the warm sunlight, of the great forests of the Esterelles where the wild boar hides in the thickets and the deer and their young bound lightly through the grassy glades. He sang of the blue sea, the Mediterranean, and of ships that sail across it to distant lands. He sang of the life of courts, of feasting and music, of the peasants and their little farms, of the vintage and the harvest and the village feasts and dances that always followed them.

Mietto listened entranced. Never before had she heard real music, never listened to such marvelous poetry. The fables and maxims and epics that she learned for her father were wont to be gloomy and sad, for such were his tastes; but these songs that Sieur Gervais sang were vivid and alive, and their stories seemed true, truer than the stories of the peddlers, which Mietto had lately begun to believe



THE TROUBADOUR PLAYED BEFORE THE COUNT AND COUNTESS.

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were only fairy tales; and the music that he sang and played on his harp was far more beautiful than their songs.

It was still afternoon when Sieur Gervais abruptly ceased his singing. One understanding spirit, and that a child's, is hardly enough to inspire a poet for long; and the bored politeness of the rest of his audience began to depress him. He begged the count for permission to retire, as he must be on his way early in the morning.

But as he made his way to his room a little figure loomed out of the shadow of the corridor and Mietto put her hand on his arm. "I only wanted to thank you," she said breathlessly, "and to ask if all that you sang about is really true. Are people really happy, and do they really, both rich and poor, sing and laugh and dance in the country where you come from?"

"Surely, yes," said Sieur Gervais, smiling. "Of course some people have their troubles, some are ill and some are sad for a time; but when things go well with them they are happy and meet together for gayety and recreation."

"But then," said Mietto, "why aren't we like that? Nobody seems happy in Rouchoun, and they never, even the townsfolk, meet together to feast and dance. Why, I don't believe they would enjoy it if they did!"

"Perhaps it is because the sun shines here so seldom," said Sieur Gervais, sitting down on the broad window seat. "How can a people be happy in gloom and twilight? Not

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only do the fruits of the earth need the sun to ripen them, but human beings need the sunlight also to make their hearts joyful. Messer Tourbassin may at last discover with his chemistry something which will supply warmth to the earth and cause the crops to ripen; but without the sun I doubt if there will ever be a carefree, light-hearted race of people."

"Why," asked Mietto again, "doesn't the sun shine here too, as it does in other places?"

Sieur Gervais pointed to the great rock, that could be seen from the window, towering black against the sky. "*That* is the reason," he said. "Although it is late afternoon, the sun is still shining on the hills and on the plains, where here it has been twilight all day."

Mietto climbed up on the window seat beside him. "I wonder if it will ever fall," she said. "Surely that is impossible; but perhaps there are wise men in the world, wiser even than Messer Tourbassin, who know how human beings can be made happy though they have very little sunshine. I do want the people of Rouchoun to be happy as the people are in all those cities you have told of."

Sieur Gervais smiled again. "I doubt if there are men wise enough for that. Perhaps the Golden Goat, if you could find him, would help you to discover the secret of prosperity and happiness."

Then he told Mietto all he knew of that strange creature,

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half real, half supernatural, who wanders about Provence, bounding from crag to crag in the mountains or grazing quietly in the fields and pasture lands. Sometimes, when a man greatly prospered, it was said of him that he had found some hairs of the Golden Goat, hairs of pure gold. Perhaps he had found them high up in the mountains or on a tussock of grass in a marsh. Whoever found them, his cattle thrived and his vines bore a great vintage, and his wife bore him many sons and daughters, and they were all happy together. Wherever he is even seen, it means happiness and prosperity for the people in that place. In times of war and pestilence, should some shepherd, alone in the mountain pastures, catch a glimpse of him as he leaps by, he knows that the war will end immediately and the plague will cease.

"Some say," said *Sieur Gervais*, "that he is one of the ancient gods, who so much loved the vineyards and flower gardens of Provence that he refused to return to the misty groves of Olympus but still wanders wild and free among us."

CHAPTER IV

MIETTO SETS FORTH ON HER QUEST

After the visit of *Sieur Gervais de Pontaves*, *Mietto* could think of nothing but the *Golden Goat*. If only she could go in search of him and tell him of her sunless city and the dreary people who lived there, surely he would bestow the blessing that he always had for those who caught a glimpse of him; and the only blessing that she wanted was a little of that happiness for the gloomy people of *Rouchoun* that was scattered so liberally in other parts of *Provence*.

She told *Dame Magala* all that the *troubadour* had told her, and it awakened a childhood's memory in the old lady's mind—yes, surely she had heard her mother tell of him, and there was a song she used to sing in which the refrain told how the magical goat brought happiness and prosperity. But, as for going in quest of him, *Dame Magala* was doubtful about that—*Mietto* was very young, and *Provence* was an immense country and the *Golden Goat* elusive.

As soon as the spring came once more *Mietto* again pastured the goats; but, though she danced and sang in the sun on the upland pastures once more, she would often sit on

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her cushion of wild thyme and think of the journey she longed to make.

At last she spoke to her father, the count. "Father," she said, "when *Sieur Gervais de Pontaves* visited us and told us of the happiness and prosperity of all the rest of the Kingdom of Provence, and how the sun shone even in winter and their harvests were great every year, I asked him why everything was so different here in *Rouchoun*. And he said that it was the Rock of the Giant that kept the sun from shining on us in the winter, but that men say it is the Golden Goat who wanders all over the kingdom and brings happiness to them. So I beseech you, Father, to let me go in quest of the Golden Goat. For I am sure that, as we are hidden behind the Great Rock, he has never passed this way; and I would beg him to visit us too and then our crops would grow even without *Messer Tourbassin's* chemistry and all of *Rouchoun* would be happy and prosperous!"

Mietto had planned her speech up on the hillside, for she wanted to appear very grown up and reasonable. But her father hardly listened to her. "Of course that is impossible, Mietto," he said. "You, who are still only a child, how could you journey through the length and breadth of Provence in search of something that is, in all probability, nothing but a superstition, a figment of the imagination of ignorant peasants and poets?"

Mietto, disappointed, pleaded with her mother, who

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languidly said: "Child, do not bother me with such romantic nonsense, but attend to your stitches; they are getting long and irregular."

She pleaded with Louvis, Guibert and Léoun, who were now grown to be tall youths, solemn and silent. "You have horses, you are almost grown men; it would be easy for you to go to search for the Golden Goat," she said. "And think how happy everybody will be if you succeed in finding him and bringing him here—then we will have festivals and music and we will dance and have tournaments as they do in other places!"

But she could not stir them. Indeed Léoun said: "We are contented as we are. The life that Sieur Gervais de Pontaves described does not attract us at all. Of what use is all this song and dance when the ordinary pursuits of the day are fatiguing enough? Why, he actually said that the knights and squires of the feudal castles often do not retire till nearly midnight! How absurd to waste their time in idleness when the day is far too short for study!"

She tried to interest her mother's ladies. She even pleaded with Messer Tourbassin, the alchemist, but he gave her little encouragement. It seemed as though nothing but the topic of the Golden Goat was discussed in the castle.

The count and countess were in despair. Gone were the days of peace, with Mietto happy on the upland pastures

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with her goats, leaving the inmates of the castle to their comfortable silence and their gloomy occupations. Now



the summer was passing and the days were growing shorter and every day Mietto returned a little earlier, full of some fresh argument for going on her mad adventure.

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Again Messer Tourbassin consulted the stars; and at last, after several days of study, he announced that Mietto was destined indeed to wander far afield and see many strange things. Messer Tourbassin showed his chart of the stars to the count, he traced a line from constellation to constellation, he showed him figures and hieroglyphics, then shrugged his shoulders. "Each one," he said, "must work out his or her own destiny. What is written in the stars will come to pass, so perhaps it were well to let the young countess have her will. The writing in the stars reveals also that no danger or misfortune will threaten her footsteps."

So at last the count and countess gave their consent. In the spring Mietto should start on her journey; and, as befitted a young countess, she should have an escort—three men-at-arms and the Lady Nicole for her duena.

Mietto was almost as appalled as the Lady Nicole herself. How could she ever hope to find the Golden Goat when accompanied by the Lady Nicole and the men-at-arms? For Mietto felt sure that the Golden Goat was not to be found by anyone traveling along the highways, and she knew well that the Lady Nicole would never dream of leaving their comparative safety and comfort. Indeed she could not help laughing to herself at the thought of her tall, spare figure painfully climbing through the narrow

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paths between the vineyards, or clambering up some rocky mule track in pursuit of the Golden Goat.

So one day Mietto, sitting up in the pasture, pondering over these things, decided that she could wait no longer. She must start now, and she must start alone; for she believed that, if she waited and went attended as her father had decreed, she would never succeed in her quest.

When the sun had set and the stranger goat had helped her to herd the goats which were wandering in every direction, now that the green tufts of grass were growing scarcer, Mietto made a last effort to catch him and hug him to show her gratitude to him. All the summer he had helped her whenever his help was needed and she felt that she might never see him again as she had determined to start on her journey in the morning. But the goat, as usual, backed away, and Mietto slowly followed Dame Magala's herd down to the postern gate.

To Dame Magala alone she told her plan. "The winter will soon be here," she said, "when the goats stay in their stables anyway, and I hope to be home before the summer."

Dame Magala, seeing that Mietto had decided to go, no longer tried to dissuade her. Instead she gave her one of her cheeses and a little loaf of fresh bread as a provision for the journey and kissed her and wished her well.

That evening Mietto was very loving and affectionate to all her family—she laughed and jested as she used to do

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before she had heard of the Golden Goat. And, when it was time for her to go to bed, after saying good night she came back again and kissed them all, much to their surprise.

The next morning she waked very early, long before anybody in the castle was astir. She dressed quickly and put on her gray mantle, slung the basket filled with bread and cheese over her shoulder, and tiptoed noiselessly down the great stone stairway. Then, while the watchman had his back turned, she slipped past him out of the castle gate. There was no one yet abroad in the silent streets, and soon she had left Rouchoun behind her and was walking along the road toward the notch between the mountains, through which she had so often watched the peddlers appear.

It was much further than she had expected, and when she reached it at last and met the full blaze of the sun she had to shield her eyes from the brilliant light. Behind her, though it was late in the morning, Rouchoun still lay in shadow. A few steps further and Mietto stood full in the sun, but she realized now that she had much further to go before she would reach those southern lands that *Sieur Gervais* and the peddlers had described. On this side of the mountain the thyme and lavender grew thicker, but no fertile terraces and orchards lay before her yet; there was no castle or farm or tower or chapel to be seen, only another mountain rose beyond the forest that grew in the valley below.

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Poor Mietto felt tired and hungry; she rested for a while beside the road and ate the lunch that was also her breakfast. Then she walked on down into the forest and for some time she walked through a long corridor between the pine trees. She enjoyed their resinous fragrance, but at last the road began to wind up another mountain and the trees grew thinner. When she reached the top she looked back northward across the valley for a last glance at the great Rouchoun du Géant, lying with the sun shining full upon it. Below the rock the slopes were so strewn with boulders that few trees could grow there and those were bent forward as if about to fall.

But how different, as she walked forward, she found the other side of the mountain! Here the ground sloped gently and was one mass of flowering bushes. Great clumps of golden gorse and rosemary and thyme were covered with such a profusion of blossoms that they did not look like the same plants that grew on the pasture land below the Rouchoun du Géant.

Here stretched a pasture of thick green grass, where a group of fat cattle were grazing lazily, and below the pasture lay an upland farm in all the beauty of a rich harvest. The road, however, did not wind down into this fertile valley, but turned to the right among the hilltops and finally disappeared between some pine-clad mountains to the west.

Mietto did not hesitate. As the road no longer ran in

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the direction she wanted to go, she would leave the road and climb straight down the hillside and ask shelter for the night at the farmhouse. But climbing down the mountain was not so easy as it looked. The gorse, though it was so beautiful and fragrant, was full of long thorns that tore Mietto's dress and wounded her hands. Some places were so steep that she slipped on the stones and fell; but at last she reached the first patch of cultivated land and found a narrow path leading down between the vineyards, where the vines were bent to the ground with the weight of their clusters of purple grapes. Mietto picked a bunch of grapes and ate them—never had she imagined that anything could taste so delicious!

Soon the vineyards gave place to fruit orchards, peach trees covered with pink and yellow fruit, plum trees, and nectarine and fig trees, each in its own terrace among trees of its own kind. Lower still were the vegetable gardens and the flower gardens—whole terraces of them, and the air was perfumed with their fragrance. Mietto forgot that she was tired and that her feet ached and her hands were bleeding. She had reached the country of the south, and it was even more beautiful than she had imagined it after hearing *Sieur Gervais's* songs.

Just in front of her she saw a little farmhouse, with a cobbled path leading to the door which was open; and a

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cheerful-looking, plump woman was sitting on the doorstep with her distaff in her hand, singing to herself.



Hearing footsteps she looked up and saw Mietto, her dress torn to tatters at the hem, her hands covered with

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scratches, her felt shoes, which were never meant for treading mile after mile of cobbled road or climbing down steep mountain sides, all in holes. "You poor child," said the kind-faced woman, as she got to her feet and took Mietto in her arms. "Where have you come from? I fear that you have lost your way in the mountains; but now all is well. You can rest now—also, I am sure you will be glad to have something to eat." And she led Mietto into her cool, big kitchen, with its dirt floor strewn with rushes and its mud walls covered with shining copper.

A fire was burning on the hearth underneath a big pot which gave forth an appetizing smell. Dame Isabeau lifted the lid and stirred the contents with a long iron spoon. "The soup is not cooked yet," she said regretfully. "I am not expecting the children back for an hour; they have gone to the village and they always dally on their errands. But I will give you some milk to stay your hunger."

As she was speaking she bustled into the larder and came back with a big bowl of milk and a generous wedge of coarse rye bread and two enormous peaches. Mietto was indeed hungry, for, after all, her lunch had been slight and she had traveled many arduous miles. The bread and milk were delicious, the milk yellow and creamy, as indeed it should have been with all the lush green grass that the cows had to feed upon. No wonder that the milk was different from the thin, bluish liquid given by the poor cows

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of Rouchoun, fed on a meager fare of coarse, yellow grass and inferior hay! As for the peaches, Mietto had never even dreamed that anything could taste so delicious.

Dame Isabeau had managed to contain her curiosity till Mietto had finished eating. She sat back on her tall chair, wielding her distaff and humming to herself. But as soon as Mietto had finished her last mouthful she began: "And now, my child, tell me all about yourself. Where do you come from, and how did you manage to become separated from your retinue, because I can see that you are of gentle birth?" And she glanced at Mietto's simple gray dress, which was trimmed with fur; for in those far-off days only those of noble birth were allowed to wear fur.

Mietto was only too eager to tell her story. Everything seemed possible in this sunlit world. And who knew but that Dame Isabeau might herself have seen the Golden Goat, which would explain the magic prosperity of the farm?

So she told Dame Isabeau all about the dreary city of Rouchoun—how the sun seldom shone and the crops never ripened and the people never smiled; and Dame Isabeau shook her head sympathetically and raised her hands in horror. "And yet," she said, "the saying goes 'Rich as a citizen of Rouchoun!' But what, indeed, is the good of sacks full of golden *écus* if they cannot serve to purchase

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even one apple which has ripened and become rosy in the sunshine!"

When Mietto asked her hopefully if *she* knew where the Golden Goat lived, Dame Isabeau could not help her. "No, never have I heard of such a being. But I work hard from morning to nightfall; there is so much to do on a farm where one crop succeeds another that there is little enough time left for spinning and weaving and dyeing the clothes we wear, and no time at all to go to the village and hear the gossip. You should ask the old men in the village who sit all day on the square with nothing to do but to talk to every passing stranger. If talk is going around of such a magic creature, be sure they will have heard of it.

"Tomorrow," she continued, "we are going to gather in our grapes, and the harvest is so plentiful that I am short-handed. There are so many vineyards, and the boys and girls give their services where they can get most money and feasting. So, will you stay with us till the vintage is over? Then you can inquire about this wondrous goat; for of what use is it to set forth on a quest if you do not even know in what direction you must go?"

These seemed wise words, and Mietto gratefully agreed. She already loved the farm and the cheerful Dame Isabeau. Now she heard jolly, laughing voices approaching outside, the door was flung open and in walked Elizo and Jannetoun,

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two children of Dame Isabeau, followed by their father, the kindly Père Marius.

Elizo, the eldest, might have been sixteen; she was very pretty. Jannetoun was twelve and, though no taller than Mietto, she was a great deal plumper, as was natural when one remembers all the delicious things she had to eat. The two girls stopped when they saw Mietto, and looked at her with open mouths, till Dame Isabeau said testily: "Why do you stand gaping like numskulls? Greet the Demoiselle Mietto, who has come to help with the vintage. She will sleep with you in the big bed—where there is room for two, a third can always find a cranny to creep into!"

Jannetoun giggled at this; and soon Elizo and Jannetoun were telling all that had happened to them in the village that afternoon. Mietto listened silently; she felt a little shy of these merry girls, for she had never had any friends of her own age. But when Jannetoun said something funny her laughter rang out clear and sweet, and the girls and Dame Isabeau and Père Marius looked at her and then at each other and laughed in sympathy.

Mietto was quite able to enjoy a second meal of soup, made with fresh vegetables seasoned with herbs that grew in Dame Isabeau's herb garden; but before she had finished her bowl her head began to droop and she could hardly keep her eyes open.

"No wonder," said Dame Isabeau, "the poor child is

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asleep. She has been walking since dawn this morning, Elizo. Help her up the ladder and put her to bed."

Elizo put her arm gently around her and together they climbed the creaky ladder to the loft, which was almost filled up by an enormous bed and an oak chest.

Mietto hardly knew how she got undressed, and the moment she sank into the feather bed she fell asleep; nor did she waken when, an hour later, Elizo and Jannetoun came softly up the ladder and climbed into the bed beside her.

CHAPTER V

THE FERTILE VALLEY

The next day after her long journey Mietto sadly overslept herself. At last she was awakened by a broad shaft of sunlight shining full on her face through the uncurtained window. The big bed was empty and the place seemed strangely silent, for the people of the farm had long since climbed up to the vineyards and were busy gathering the grapes. All but Jannetoun, who, as soon as she heard Mietto's step on the floor, came running up the ladder, carrying over one arm a striped orange and blue skirt and a blue jacket.

"Good morrow, Mietto," she said gayly, "you have slept the clock around—such a feat I have never been guilty of! Mother says that your kirtle is so torn that it will take many hours to mend it. She says to try if this dress will fit you—'tis one she wore when she was a girl and it has grown too small and tight for me now."

Mietto dressed hastily; to her delight the skirt and jacket fitted her perfectly, and she was glad indeed to exchange her drab gray-velvet kirtle for the bright colors of Jannetoun's short peasant dress. The green patches on the elbows made it all the prettier to her eyes. When she had

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put on one of her peasant coifs Jannetoun cried out: "But it makes you look prettier than ever, even though it hides your hair! Come down to the kitchen and you can admire



yourself in the bottom of the big copper pan. I always look at myself when I have made myself ready in my best for Sundays and feast days."

On the table by the window was a big bowl of milk and a

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hunk of rye bread which Dame Isabeau had left for Mietto; she herself and Père Marius and Elizo were all up in the vineyard.

When Mietto had finished Jannetoun said: "Mother told me to wait for you and not to waken you. And I did not, did I? But now let us run up the hill and join them, for Father is anxious to get all the grapes in quickly now that they are at their best."

Père Marius was not a wealthy farmer; he only owned a small holding with some eight or ten terraces of vineyard, and a little orchard of peach and orange trees. But the land was fertile and the vines were covered with grapes. Indeed the grapes of Père Marius were famous in that countryside; and, when they were all gathered in and carried to Messer Savornin, who owned the biggest wine press near by, they were always set aside to be made into a fine sweet wine that was so delicious that its fame had spread afar. Every year, indeed, many wine skins full of it were ordered by King René himself for the Court at Aix.

Besides the vineyards and the orchards, Père Marius's special pride was his vegetable garden, where grew the egg-plants and peas and beans, the lentils and the squash and cabbages which Dame Isabeau made into her delicious soups. There was also a broad meadow where grew the hay which fed Muguette and Violette, the two plump cows who supplied the milk and the butter and cheese. Janne-

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toun showed them with pride to Mietto when they passed them where they were tethered in a little meadow halfway up to the vineyards; and when they reached the vineyards she had another treasure to display. This was Nou-nou, the fat little donkey they found tied to a tree lazily munching the sweet, juicy grass and watching with mild wonder the exertions of Père Marius, Dame Isabeau and Elizo, who were all bending busily over the grape vines.

Soon Jannetoun and Mietto were hard at work too. At first Mietto was slow and awkward; but, by watching Jannetoun, she caught the knack, and then they had great fun to see who should fill her basket the sooner. When the big flat baskets were heaped to the brim with the clusters of grapes, they would carry them to the panniers that were set in the shade and Dame Isabeau would leave her picking to superintend the packing of the grapes, which had to be most carefully done—first a layer of grape leaves, then a layer of grapes, then more grape leaves to prevent their being crushed too soon. When the panniers were full they were laden on Nou-nou's back and on the back of another donkey that had been borrowed for the day, and Père Marius stopped his picking to drive them down the hill to Messer Savornin's press. Lucky were the donkeys that the wine press was in the valley and the vineyards on the hill-side, so that when they were heavily loaded their journey



THE PANNIERS WERE FULL OF GRAPES

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was down hill, and it was always with empty panniers that they climbed up again.

It was hard work, the picking, and the sun was hot; but there was much talk and laughter, and now and again Dame Isabeau would start a song in which the rest would join, even Père Marius, though he sang sadly out of tune—but this only added to the merriment.

At midday they all ceased their work and sat down in the shade to eat their lunch of bread and cheese. After the meal Dame Isabeau and Père Marius lay down and went to sleep; but Mietto and Elizo and Jannetoun had too much to talk of to follow their wise example.

The third day the grapes were all gathered in and, when they were seated at supper that evening, Père Marius said: "Never have I known such a harvest! We have two more loads than we had last year and every cluster perfect. That means a few more gold pieces for your dowry, Elizo!"

Elizo blushed and Dame Isabeau laughed her jolly fat laugh. "Well, I am glad the harvest is over," she said, "and we can think of something else than grapes, and maybe I can straighten out the crick in my back. There is hardly any bread left in the crock, and if the harvest had lasted another day we might have starved. For as long as there is a grape left on the vine you would never allow me to waste my time on such foolishness as bread-making, would you? Well, I will mix the batter now, and Mietto and

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Jannetoun can carry the loaves down to the bakehouse the first thing in the morning. Then, Mietto, you can speak to the old men in the square, and perhaps you will hear some tidings of this Golden Goat you are seeking. I know it will please Jannetoun well; she likes nothing better than to play about the village. Elizo and I will be cleaning the house and will be glad that you spend the whole day there."

So, after they had finished their breakfast, the two little girls went down the steep path, across the brook on stepping-stones, and up the little hill to the village of Les Bosqs. Mietto thought the village looked not unlike Rouchoun, built as it was on the side of the hill—but what a difference in the hill! Where that on which Rouchoun was built was so barren, the hill of Les Bosqs was one mass of vineyards and gardens and orange and peach orchards. And, as for the people who lived there, they did not seem to belong to the same race!

On entering Rouchoun one saw only citizens walking gloomily with bent heads, not speaking to each other even for greeting, but each going sadly about his business. One saw few women in the streets after the morning hours, and then only hurrying from the market with their baskets filled with a few poor vegetables. As for the children and the young people, when they were not working they were wont to sit languidly on their doorsteps, hands in pockets,

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doing nothing at all. And nothing was heard in the streets but the tramp of footsteps.

But Les Bosqs was a gay and noisy little village, and as they entered the old gate Mietto and Jannetoun were welcomed with nods and cheerful greetings. Everybody seemed plump and prosperous and had much to say to his neighbors. On every hand one heard merry voices calling out, and those who walked alone were singing or whistling, while from some open doorway could be heard the sound of a guitar. The women sat on their doorsteps gossiping with one another as they peeled their vegetables or, with their spinning wheels in front of them, spun or carded wool.

Mietto noticed that they all loved bright colors; if their costumes happened to be of brown or gray, you may be sure they sported a brilliant scarf or sash. But above all the market place enchanted Mietto, with its stalls overflowing with fresh green vegetables and sun-ripened fruit. She could never have imagined such profusion; and, as they stood and gossiped with a friend of Jannetoun's, the housewives came flocking and bought only of the best.

When they had taken the bread to the community bake-house Jannetoun led Mietto to the village square where there were stone seats under the lime trees; and on the seats, enjoying the warm autumn sunlight, sat the old men of the village. Jannetoun pushed Mietto forward and said: "This

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is Mietto, who has come a long distance in search of a strange being called the Golden Goat. My mother thought that perhaps you might have heard tell of him."

The old men were all interested in Mietto's quest. One or two had a vague memory that ever so long ago they had heard tell of him—there was a phrase one used to children when one had to deny them something: "Go, ask the Golden Goat!" But as for the origin of this saying, they had forgotten it. Then one old man said, nodding his head: "Ah, if Grandpère Audibert were here, he could tell you—there is not much, I reckon, that Père Audibert does not know. But he has been gone this day sennight to visit his brother who lives on the other side of Grasse, where he was born and lived as a boy. He thought to be home for the vintage, but he doubtless found it hard to tear himself away from his birthplace."

When Mietto told Dame Isabeau this, that the old men had said that Grandpère Audibert might be able to tell her of the Golden Goat when he returned from Grasse, Dame Isabeau said: "Stay here with us until he returns. Even though the vintage is over, there is still much work to be done to prepare for the winter. There is the wool to be carded and flax to be prepared for the spinning of linen. I am run short of my store of herbs and roots, too, where-with I make ointments and brews for sickness and fever. Elizo and Jannetoun know how to recognize them and

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always love to search for them in the woods and on the hillside."

Mietto thanked her. She was very glad to stay a little longer with the cheerful Dame Isabeau and her jolly daughters, and she loved the happy, active life of the farm. For active and laborious too it was. Everybody rose at dawn to get through the work before sundown, and Mietto helped with it all. Elizo taught her to milk the cows and churn the butter and to make cheese, so that Mietto was likely to rival Dame Magala herself in this art. She also learned to spin woolen thread and helped to weave it into the coarse homespun of which the peasants' clothes were made. She and Elizo and Jannetoun went into the woods and picked berries which Dame Isabeau brewed into dyes of scarlet and blue and orange to dye the homespun.

And there were the herbs to be gathered for Dame Isabeau's simples, for she was what was known as a "wise woman." She was skilled in the knowledge of healing herbs, and when anyone in the village was sick or wounded they came to her; and, if it was the fever that ailed them, she would brew a decoction of certain herbs that never failed to heal them. In her store closet she kept a row of pots of various ointments made with soothing root juices mingled with olive oil and beef lard that in a short time would usually heal the most festering wounds. Other ointments Dame Isabeau dealt in also that made her the friend

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and adviser of all the young girls in the district—lotions which kept the hands soft and white in spite of much scrubbing and washing, lotions that prevented sunburn in haying time and vintage harvest!

Mietto was amazed to learn that the little wild plants possessed such marvelous properties; and Dame Isabeau, delighted by her interest—for neither Elízo nor Jannetoun showed any aptitude for this part of her work—was glad to teach her all she could. So under her direction Mietto learned which herbs were beneficial for certain ailments, which best for healing ointments, how to pound them and boil them and mix them with olive oil or lard, with oil of lavender or lemon flower, each in its right quantity.

And proud she was the day when she filled a little earthenware pot with an ointment of her own making, and prouder still when a small boy from the village arrived with a badly scalded hand, and, Dame Isabeau away attending a sick woman on a neighboring farm, Elízo bade her attend to him herself. So, using the ointment that she had made, she bandaged the wound and told the lad to come back the next day. When Dame Isabeau saw his wound, already healing, she said that she could not have done better herself—and in a few days it was entirely healed!

So the days passed by, filled with hard work from sunrise to sunset; but the work was more interesting than play

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to Mietto, for she was learning something new to her all the time. Dame Isabeau and Père Marius and the two girls seemed to enjoy it as much as she did. There was much talk and laughter while churning butter or carding wool and spinning, and often some gossips of the village



would climb the hill to pass a pleasant hour with them. Mietto and Jannetoun were always running down to the village, too, on some errand or other which often lengthened into a game with some of the children there.

As soon as the day's work was done the whole family would stroll down to the common outside the village, where

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nearly all were taking their ease under the trees. While Père Marius and Dame Isabeau found themselves a comfortable seat on the grass near one of their particular cronies, Mietto and Elizo and Jannetoun would join the young people. Those who possessed them would start some music on their pipes or mouth organs, and the rest would dance and play round games until the stars came out and it was time to walk home and go to bed.

But on the day of the harvest festival nobody did any work at all. They danced and played all day long, after having done a double share of work the day before. The fire in the bakehouse had been kept going at full blast, while all day long the children ran to and fro carrying the holiday dishes to be baked. Dame Isabeau had prepared a pasty with meat and vegetables; this was a great treat, for only on feast days did Dame Isabeau's little family taste meat. Soup made with fresh vegetables and dried beans and lentils, wheaten porridge sweetened with sun-dried figs and raisins, dark-colored rye bread with plenty of milk and cheese was their daily fare of which they never really tired.

Everybody enjoyed the holiday fare of chicken and meat pasty and cakes cooked with honey, and ate perhaps more than was good for them—but it is doubtful if they would have enjoyed the same fare every day of the week with all the extra trouble it entailed!

On the feast day itself Dame Isabeau and Elizo and

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Jannetoun put on their best dresses and embroidered coifs, and Père Marius looked very gay too in a scarlet jerkin and bright blue doublet and hose. Poor Mietto had no holiday dress, for she did not want to trail the ground in her velvet, fur-trimmed kirtle and robe, though it had been beautifully mended for her by Dame Isabeau. She much preferred to wear Jannetoun's peasant frock, which she loved because of its bright colors and short skirt. But when Elizo had lent her, from her dower chest, a pretty silk neckerchief that Père Marius had brought back to her from the big fair at Draguignan the year before, and when Dame Isabeau had washed and ironed and pleated for her a fine linen coif, she looked as well dressed as anyone.

When the church bells began to ring they all hied them down to the village, each one staggering under a heavy basket, filled with the delicious things that had been cooked the day before. Père Marius's basket was the heaviest of all. It was filled with fruits and vegetables and all the good things that grew on the farm: a cluster of grapes, the most perfect that had ripened in the vineyard, an enormous golden melon, a sheaf of corn, beans, cabbages, onions and peas, peaches and plums, a fresh cheese and a pat of butter, a square of white linen and one of wool dyed a bright scarlet. These were the gifts that Père Marius was going to present to the church in gratitude for the plentiful harvest!

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People were pouring out of their houses dressed in holiday attire of scarlet and blue, purple and orange, and all carried baskets of gifts. These they bore into the church and, moving up the aisle in solemn procession, presented to the priest, who blessed the gifts and handed them to the acolytes to be placed on the steps of the altar, where they showed to all the richness and fertility of the little valley and the gratitude of its people.

After the service was over the fun began. The whole village trooped off to the common, leaving the streets empty and deserted, and for the rest of the day there was feasting and dancing and music. Nor did the feast end when the sun set and the stars began to appear, for the men of the village had prepared an enormous bonfire with another huge pile of brushwood to replenish it. There were also torches stuck in tall poles, which they now lit. When it was quite dark, the village provost set light to the bonfire, and as it flamed up the young men ran in single file and leaped over it through the flames.

Mietto was horrified at first; she was afraid there would be many burns for her and Dame Isabeau to tend on the morrow. But Jannetoun and Elizo seemed to have no fears; they clapped their hands and applauded the young man who leaped when the flames were highest, so she soon joined them in their applause. And, as it happened, not

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one, so fast did they leap, even singed the sole of his felt shoe!

When the last youth had leaped the bonfire, everybody, young and old, joined hands and danced around it till the old ones were out of breath and had to drop out. But the young ones kept it up till there was no brush left to burn, and the torches began to flicker and go out.

CHAPTER VI

MIETTO MEETS THE JONGLEURS

Mietto had been nearly a month on the farm before Grandpère Audibert at last returned from his visit to Grasse.

One afternoon, when Jannetoun and Mietto went down to the village to carry the bread to be baked at the village bakehouse, they saw a new figure seated among the old men on the stone benches under the lime trees. He was very old, his face was wrinkled like an autumn apple, but his black eyes twinkled with good humor.

When he caught sight of Jannetoun and Mietto he called out: "Good day, Jannetoun. It is good to be among my own folks again. Because one was born in a certain town does not mean, after all, that it is the best place on earth. I always wanted to see Grasse again before I died. But, what will you? it is all changed, and nearly all my old friends are gone and the young ones have forgotten my name! I was glad to return to Les Bosqs. And this must be Mietto," he continued, "the child who wishes to learn about the Golden Goat! Sit beside me, and I will tell you all I know. It is true I have never seen the Golden Goat myself, though I have hunted for him far and wide, but I

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have seen and spoken with a man who has seen him, yes and almost touched him!

"It was many years ago, when I was no older than you, and lived with my parents in a little village near Grasse. It was during the summer of the great drought. For months not a drop of rain fell, the vineyards were dried and yellow, the grain was shriveling in the ears of wheat. There was no water in the fountains in the villages; even many of the springs were dried up. Everyone was worried and anxious; if rain did not fall soon, there would be no hope at all for any harvest, and famine would stare us in the face.

"One day we were sitting over our evening meal when a neighbor, Guilmetto Lautier, burst in. I can see his face as if it were yesterday—all shining and excited. 'I have seen the Golden Goat!' he cried. 'He passed as close to me as you are now. I almost touched his golden fleece. From his hoofs showers of gold pieces scattered only to disappear in the cracks of the rocks. Here is one that fell in the path at my feet. I watched him out of sight and he bounded up the hillside from terrace to terrace. Neighbors, that means prosperity and good fortune for us all, according to the old legend!' And the next day the rain fell! Never was there such a rain—soft and warm; it quenched the thirsty earth, turned the yellow grass green again and saved the harvest!"

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"And was he ever seen by anybody else?" asked Mietto.

"No, he was never seen again in those parts, though I and the other children sought him endlessly in the moun-



tains. From time to time we heard rumors of his having been seen in other parts of the country, but always he dis-

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appears again and nobody has ever been able to discover his secret lair."

"Oh, if only I knew where to look for him!" said Mietto. "Always one hears that others have seen him, but I am afraid I will never find one who has really seen him and can tell me where to begin my search."

Grandpère Audibert looked thoughtful. "You should journey to Aix," he said, "and seek audience with the good King René. For he has surrounded himself with the wisest and ablest men, not only of Provence, but of the whole world. He is the ablest and best ruler that any country has ever known. I am old enough to remember the days before he became Count of Provence—for at first he did not call himself king—when the peasants groaned under the burden of heavy taxes which we could hardly pay though we worked from sunrise to sunset. There was no time then for merrymaking.

"But King René altered all that—if the taxes were too burdensome he remitted them, for he wished all his subjects to have the time to enjoy the dances and the music that he enjoys himself. Why, he has even established feast days, making it one's duty to feast and make merry. Yet never have we been so prosperous. He has shown us how to cultivate the sugar cane, that strange new plant whose juices are of a sweetness unimaginaire, which the whole of France desires to buy from us. And he has brought us

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a new grape, the muscat grape that makes a wine so much better than any we had before—we cannot grow enough of them!

“If the good King René himself does not know the secret hiding place of the Golden Goat, and if he does not visit him there I will be surprised; for he has brought us so much happiness that I think he must have learned some of his magic from him.”

Mietto was much encouraged by all that Grandpère Audibert had told her. Of course King René would know all about the Golden Goat, as he had made it his work all his life to see that his subjects should enjoy all the good things of the earth. And was that not what the Golden Goat always brought to those to whom he came?

When she and Jannetoun came back to the farm in the evening she told Dame Isabeau and Père Marius everything that Grandpère Audibert had said. Dame Isabeau looked very sad. “That means that we will lose you, my child,” she said, “just as we had learned to love you. I had hoped that you would be content to give up your quest and stay with us for the winter at least; we would have looked on you as our own daughter.”

Mietto flung her arms around good Dame Isabeau’s neck, and thanked her and Père Marius. “I would have loved to stay with you,” she said, “for I have never been so happy in my life. But every day that I go to the village and see

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how happy and contented everybody is, and when I hear them sing at their work and join together in the village festivals, I can't help remembering the sad people of Rouchoun and I know I can't rest or be really happy myself until they too have learned what happiness means."

So the next day Mietto set forth again, dressed in the little peasant dress that Jannetoun had given her, her golden hair hidden under her peasant cap. Dame Isabeau and Père Marius, Elizo and Jannetoun, who cried bitterly at losing her friend, all accompanied her to the highway that wound like a ribbon across the hills and valleys. It was a sad moment when she kissed them all good-by, and she kept looking backward to watch their figures grow smaller and smaller as they climbed up to their farm again.

Mietto walked slowly along the road, which sloped down the hill. There was much to see and wonder at. As it was still early, there were few travelers abroad in this sparsely inhabited part of the country. Once a party of peddlers passed her, but their faces were strange to her. They were not the same as were wont to visit Rouchoun in the summer time. Now and again she would meet groups of peasants on their way to work on their farms, sometimes their children were with them, the youngest riding proudly on the donkey; and all she passed gave her a pleasant greeting and asked a blessing on the new day.

Soon the road left the mountains behind, and Mietto

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saw a broad plain stretched out, with little, low, cone-shaped hills crowned by villages and feudal castles, their roofs shining red in the sunlight. The fields that lay before her were broad and fertile, while to the north towered the jagged line of the blue mountains that she had left behind.



The sun was high in the sky when she reached a broad river bed, where, in a narrow channel among the stones, the River Var ran swiftly on its course from the mountains to the sea. Here groups of women were hard at work washing their clothes in the river. Mietto could hear their voices rising up toward her as they laughed and gossiped

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together while they thumped their linen energetically on the stones to make it white. It was noon by now, and Mietto sat down by the bank of the river to rest a while and watch the women at their work. Soon one of them straightened up and said: "Well, as for me, I have had enough of work and I am ready for my lunch." And she went to a wheelbarrow and brought a basket and began to unpack cheese and bread and wine and figs. The other women followed her example, and when one of them caught sight of Mietto they all called out and asked her to come and join them.

Mietto gladly did so; she had her own lunch that Dame Isabeau had given her, but she wanted to talk to these jolly women. They were just as much interested in her and wanted to know who she was and where she came from. So Mietto told them who she was and of the search she was making. The women had heard of the Golden Goat, but their stories were all of bygone days and they seemed astonished that anyone in these days should go in search of him.

"What can you want with the Golden Goat?" one woman asked. "You, with your golden hair and laughing eyes? One can see that at your birth you were given the gift of happiness and the grace of passing it on to others, and the Golden Goat himself can do no more for you."

But when Mietto told about the gloomy city of Rouchoun and its sad inhabitants, the women raised their hands

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in horror and wished her a successful ending to her adventure.

After they had finished their lunch they rested a while in the shade of the big olive trees that grew near the bank of the river. Then they went on with their washing; it looked such a fascinating occupation that Mietto begged to be allowed to help. So she also knelt on the stones and swished the garments in the cool water and laid them out to dry on the sweet green grass.

By mid-afternoon the women, having all finished their work, gathered the clean linen together in their big baskets and said they must go home. One of them urged Mietto to come with her to spend the night at her house. However, as their homes were on the road over which she had already come, Mietto thanked the woman for her offer but said that she must be on her way. Had she not the silver piece that Dame Isabeau had given her, and could she not buy hospitality for the night at the inn of the next village?

So the women bade her "God speed," and Mietto walked on in the coolness of the late afternoon. Soon the sky in the west became beautiful with rose-colored clouds and the sun lit up the whole countryside with a golden glow. Mietto gazed with joy and wonder and then she threw down her basket and her cloak and began to dance, one of the dances that she had taught herself on the upland pastures while pasturing Dame Magala's goats.

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She flung her arms to the sky, she stepped backward and forward, slowly at first, but gracefully. Then her dance grew faster and she whirled round and round, faster and faster, till at last she dropped down on the grass under a gnarled old olive tree to get her breath. She was surprised to hear a sound of clapping just over her head and a voice called out: "Brava, brava!"

Just above her a boy was looking down on her from one of the highest branches of the tree. When he saw she had seen him, he called: "Wait a moment, I am coming down"; and he slid quickly down the trunk. He was a slender boy of about twelve years, and he had the blackest eyes she had ever seen looking out of a dark brown face with curly black hair around it. All the people she had ever seen except the minstrel had brown eyes and dark hair, for in Provence it is rare to meet a person with fair skin and blue eyes and golden hair like Mietto's; but she had never seen anybody as dark as this boy.

"In faith," he said, "I have never seen such dancing as yours. What troupe do you belong to? I did not know that there was another party of jongleurs so close behind us on the road."

"I don't belong to any party," said Mietto. "I am traveling by myself and I mean to make my way to Aix."

"Do you say so?" said the boy. "That's quite a long walk for a little girl like you! Perhaps you don't know

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that Aix is nearly a hundred miles from here! We are going to Aix ourselves to stay there for a few days before we journey on to Spain. King René is very good to us jongleurs, and we hope to earn money there to help us on our way.

"Listen," he continued, after thinking for a moment. "My name is Cecco, I belong to a troupe of jongleurs. You come with me to my grandmother and perhaps Old Juanita, when she sees you dance, will let you travel with us. Take my hand and see how fast we can run!"

So, hand in hand, they ran along the road for half a mile till they came to a flat meadow, where two wagons were standing resting on their shafts, for the horses were unhitched and quietly grazing near by. A camp fire was burning in a fireplace of stones gathered in the field, and an elderly woman was bending over it stirring something in a big pot that was hung over the fire. Several people were sitting on the grass, holding bowls on their knees, all ready to receive the contents of the steaming pot.

One of the men looked up and saw Cecco. "Just in time, Cecco, my boy," he said. "I had my eye on your portion, and there would have been none left for you had you lingered behind much longer."

"On the contrary, Niccolo," said Cecco, showing his white teeth in a grin, "it is your portion that I want

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besides my own, for I bring a guest to the feast who also is traveling to Aix."

The rest of the party looked at Mietto curiously as they made room for her, and somebody handed her a bowl; the old woman, whom Cecco had so disrespectfully called Old Juanita, ladled out some fragrant soup. Then Cecco made a deep bow and introduced Mietto to the company and the company to Mietto in grand style.

"This is Mietto, who is traveling to Aix all by herself; she dances with a grace far beyond any dancer that I have ever seen, and if she joins our company she will dance all their savings out of the stout burghers' pockets in every town we pass through. This revered lady, Mietto, who has been preparing such delicious soup for our enjoyment, is Donna Juanita and my grandmother. She is of the gypsy race, as is my Uncle Niccolo, a famous acrobat who can turn himself inside out and upside down at your pleasure!

"The gentle lady next him is the Dame Suzetto, mother of that rascal Toumas over there," and he pointed to a boy of his own age who respectfully bowed to Mietto and stuck out his tongue at Cecco. "He dances on stilts with me, or tries to, and will learn the art in time. Dame Suzetto is also the mother of that plump, sleepy baby, who is called Rosita, and she is the wife of that solemn gentleman over there, the Messer Mathieu, who by means of his harp

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and his musical voice can enchant you so that you will forget the hours that pass as he recites to you the history of the valiant Floripar, or that of the princess who became a shepherdess.

"Lastly, here am I, Cecco. I am noted for my dancing, Mietto, though I do not dance as you do; I can hop about on stilts two yards high, and I can sing and play the mouth organ and the Provençal pipe and drum. Now let me fall to, for I am hungry, and I warrant Mietto is too! Perhaps after she is refreshed she will pay us for her meal by showing us the dance to which I played unseen audience?"

And, after giving another low bow, he dropped down beside Mietto and said: "I declare, after that speech I am not sure that I won't exchange rôles with Messer Mathieu and let him dance on stilts while I do the reciting."

Supper was a happy meal; all talked together, laughing and making many jokes, or suddenly bursting into song or mimicry of some stout burgher they had passed in their journeys, who had aroused their derision. Mietto could not follow all their talk or understand all the jokes, but she joined in the laughter; and, when the meal was finished, they all clamored to see her dance.

She jumped up gladly. Cecco played on his pipe, at first softly and gently while she danced with measured steps; then he broke into wild elfin strains and Mietto danced faster and faster, light as a leaf in the autumn winds.

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When Cecco ended abruptly on a high note, the jongleurs leaped to their feet and flung themselves on Mietto.

"Beautiful, wonderful!" they cried. "Surely the fairies themselves taught you how to dance. Come with us to Aix, and I wager that you will find yourself dancing before King René himself."

That night Mietto slept under the stars for the first time in her life. Donna Juanita made her a bed on the tailboard of the wagon. From time to time she woke to see the gentle lights shining down on her from the dark blue ceiling of the sky. They seemed like the eyes of friends watching over her; and, comforted and at peace, she turned and went to sleep again.

CHAPTER VII

THE ROAD TO AIX

The next day the jongleurs struck camp, and Cecco and Toumas helped to harness the horses and to pack the pots and pans away in the wagons—which were nothing more nor less than little houses on wheels. One of them had four bunks, like shelves one above the other; and one had only two bunks, but it also was furnished with a table and two big chests, in which were stored most of the jongleurs' possessions—the acrobats' appliances, Messer Mathieu's harp, and the bright-colored costumes that they wore for their most important performances.

Donna Juanita and Suzetto and the little Rosita usually rode inside the wagons, of which Niccolo drove one and Messer Mathieu the other; but Cecco and Toumas liked to ride on the tailboard of the wagon, and of course Mietto chose to sit with them, where she could see everything they passed on the road.

In the early afternoon they came to a little town and camped on the common just outside. While the older ones were unpacking and preparing the dinner and arranging things comfortably for the night, Cecco and Toumas, with Mietto, went into the town and Cecco blew on his pipe

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while Toumas beat the drum and cried out: "Burghers, awake, the jongleurs have come to town! In an hour we will show you strange tricks—our famous acrobat, Long



Niccolo, who has played before all the kings of the world, will show you such things as you have never even dreamed of. We will tell you tales that will make you marvel, and we will provide music and dancing that will make the old

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feel young again. So come one, come all to the Great Square, and be sure that your wallets are filled with coin!"

And the burghers put their heads out of the windows and the children came running out of the doorways shouting out: "Hurrah, hurrah, the jongleurs have come to town!"

In less than an hour the whole village assembled in the square, in time to watch Long Niccolo erect his trapeze, for they would not miss a moment of the performance willingly. Cecco opened with a grand march played on his fife and drum, and old Donna Juanita danced a gypsy dance, while the whole company snapped their fingers, making a sound like castanets. Then it was the turn of Long Niccolo, who performed marvelous feats on the trapeze, that caused the burghers' mouths to open wide in wonder.

Next Cecco and Toumas showed what they could do, turning somersaults all over the place and walking on their hands and waving their feet in the air. Afterwards, to the great joy of the onlookers, they strapped on their stilts, which were a novelty that they had never seen before, for Cecco had made them after seeing some like them while they were crossing Germany. Towering above the crowd he and Toumas danced and pranced, accompanying themselves on their mouth organs. It was a tremendous success. The burghers craned their necks till they were in danger of getting a crick in them, and applauded again and again.

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But the third time Cecco called out: "Have pity, good people, we can do no more; but let me present to you a new dancer, the young and beautiful Mietto. Seeing her you will forget that you are human and imagine yourselves in some fairy glade joining in the fairy revels!"

Then he drew his reed pipe out of his pocket, which he said suited Mietto's dancing far better than his mouth organ, and Mietto began to dance; she did not feel at all shy at dancing before so many, for the music bewitched her and made her forget everything but how happy she was—and her feet answered the music's call. The people were enchanted; they wanted more and more, but at last even Mietto was out of breath.

Then Messer Mathieu sat down on one of the stone benches, tuned his harp and proceeded to relate the joyous adventures of Pierre Vidal, the Don Quixote of Provence. It was a thrilling story that he told, and the audience fixed their eyes on Messer Mathieu so as not to miss a single word. But, when he had reached the most exciting part of the story he suddenly stopped, saying: "And that is all for to-day, unless the purse strings are loosened."

Then the burghers made haste to open their purses and to shower copper coins into the caps which Cecco and Toumas held down to them from their dizzying altitude.

So Mietto traveled through the breadth of Provence in the company of the jongleurs. Every morning she rose

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with the sun to resume the journey to Aix after a night spent under the stars; and, as she sat on the tailboard of the last wagon listening to Cecco playing his flute, she would always look out from side to side over the fields and vineyards and up the little hills, so that she should not fail to see the Golden Goat if perchance he should suddenly appear.

In the afternoon they would generally arrive at some town or village and, giving their usual performance, earn enough money to replenish their store of provisions. Then there would arise a delicious fragrance from Donna Juanita's cooking pot, and the jongleurs would feast with ravenous appetite after their exertions.

Once or twice it happened that for a day or two they would pass no village on the road; then provisions would run low, and mushrooms and wild berries must needs take the place of more substantial food. If the fare was sparse Mietto would notice that her bowl was always full. At such times Cecco would claim that he was not hungry or that he did not like soup made of mushrooms, and Donna Juanita would agree that the heat of the sun had taken away her appetite also. It was of no use for Mietto to say that she was not hungry either. For Donna Juanita and Dame Suzetto always found good reasons for proving that, while their own ailments required fasting, Mietto's health called for good food and plenty of it.

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But these times were rare. Generally the jongleurs, on account of the superiority of their entertainment, had cop-



per coins to spare jingling in their pouches and sometimes some silver also.

Once, when they were entertaining at a little village, they were summoned to appear the next day at the castle

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on the top of the hill. The baron's daughter was to be wedded and the wedding party lasted for three days and three nights. The jongleurs were in constant demand to entertain the guests, who were of all ranks, from nobles and squires living far and near to the peasants and farmers who had flocked from all the near-by farms and villages.

A great tent of blue silk was erected in the castle gardens for the use of the bridal party and the baron's noble guests. The rest of the guests sat on benches at long tables in the courtyard, while cook boys and serving men ran continually from kitchen to garden carrying piping-hot pasties filled with fish and fowl and eels. There were big bowls of vegetables and bowls of soup spiced with marjoram, sage and sweet basil; and, when everybody had eaten enough, or thought they had, there were still fancy jellies and pastries and baked pears and fried almonds to tempt their appetites anew.

There had been music all the time, to which the jongleurs had contributed their full share, and dancing and song and laughter. When the feast was over at last and the guests—some on chargers, some in litters, riding on palfreys or on mules, and some walking on foot—had departed, the cook, in addition to their earnings, had presented them with three big hampers which held some of the remains of the feast. There were two roasted chickens, an eel pasty, several squire's loaves, made of milk and white flour and tasting

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very different from the black bread usually eaten by the peasants, besides a pack of the fried almonds that the children loved, a handful of spiced ginger and some comfits made from the sugar cane that King René had lately introduced into Provence.

It was a lordly gift, and meant provision for many days to come. "It comes at a lucky moment," said Cecco, "for soon, now, we leave the highroad and our way lies through the forest where for some days we may not pass another human being. I am glad, for I have had enough of crowds and even of music—that is, music made by human hands. Now our music will be provided by the birds and we will have a rest from turning handsprings and dancing on the stilts."

By noon they came to a grassy track which branched off into the cool shade of the forest. Now began the most delightful part of Mietto's journey. Hour after hour they drove through the soft green light made by the sun shining through the leaves overhead. Now and then wild animals darted across their path, deer and rabbits and little bright-eyed squirrels. Sometimes Cecco whistled to them, and they would stop in their tracks and stare at him. Once, when they stopped at noon to eat some of the delicious wedding fare that had been given them, Cecco climbed up a tree and, lying at full length along a bough, he invited a squirrel to sit on his chest while he fed it with some of the

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fried almonds. But when Mietto and Toumas joined him the squirrel fled away.

"It is because I am a gypsy and half wild myself that animals are not afraid of me," said Cecco. "Even rabbits and hares will come to me when I call them if I am alone, and once a flock of wild birds settled all over me. But if you sit very still perhaps I can gentle one of them to take food from your hands."

During these noontide halts and over the camp fire in the evenings—when they lay on the soft moss and listened to the birds singing while Cecco softly imitated their notes on his pipe—Mietto learned to know her companions better than she was able to amid the rush and bustle of arriving at a village, setting up camp, giving a performance and laughing and joking with the crowd. When it was all over then she was always too tired for anything but to turn in under her blankets and go to sleep.

She could listen for hours to the stories that Donna Juanita told her about the gypsy race and the strange history of their wanderings. "Men call us the Egyptians," she said, "and it is true we stayed once in Egypt—but first we came from a strange, far land called India." She told Mietto stories of their wanderings through Hungary, Germany and Spain, never staying more than a few nights in one place if they could help it, ready to make music and to dance, always contented and happy whether there was a

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chicken in the pot or a soup made of wild roots and mushrooms. They never owned anything themselves, but the whole world was theirs.

"You see," said Cecco on one occasion, "everybody but us belongs to something, first to a country, then to a town or village, then to a house or farm, and there they have to stay in order to look after all the things that belong to them. If the winter is cold and the winds howl, why, they can't get away. But we do! As soon as the gray days come we go south and follow the sun, and when the sun begins to rise and set toward the north we wander north again."

"Just as the birds do," interrupted Donna Juanita. "Some say that we gypsies were once birds and could fly swifter than any of them, but we stayed too long in a rice field glutting ourselves with the grain long after we ceased to be hungry—then, satiated, we fell asleep and when we woke our wings had dropped off!"

"After feasting for three days and three nights I can well believe it," said Cecco, with a laugh. "Did you all realize in all that noise and buffoonery the other night that there was a moon, or did the garish torches divert your eyes from it?"

"Anyway there is still a moon to-night and it will be full now and we will dance on the soft grass when it comes up, you and Toumas and Rosita and I . . ." and he picked up

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the plump little baby girl and whirled her round and round.

Suzetto, Rosita's mother, was a gypsy woman; but Messer Mathieu was a gentleman from Normandy who loved the gypsy life, and, though Rosita was a regular gypsy baby, Toumas had inherited the Norman temperament; he was a quiet, good-natured boy who never got angry when Cecco teased him, but he was not very good at answering his gibes.

Mietto loved the feeling of walking on soft grass instead of on the cobbled roads, and often, instead of riding on the wagon, she and Cecco would walk behind and catch up with the others when they took their noontime rest. One day they were so far behind they could not hear the voices of their company, when Mietto saw a little fawn slowly hobbling along on three feet. Cecco uttered a sound of pity. "Poor little thing," he said. "He must have lost his mother. I fear he has run a thorn into his hoof—and sometimes these thorns are poisonous!" He caught hold of the little fawn, and it was wonderful to see how the little wild animal let him handle it. He examined the hoof and sure enough there was the end of a sharp thorn just showing, which Cecco was able to pull out with a sharp jerk; but the wound was swollen and festering.

"It is even as I feared," said Cecco. "How I wish we were not in the midst of the forests; we might have bought

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a decoction of herbs and simples from some wise woman in a village. Strangely enough neither my grandmother nor Suzetto knows aught of these things."

"But I know," said Mietto. "Dame Isabeau taught me how to make an ointment that will take the fever out of any wound; and I am sure that I have seen the very plants she used growing under the trees—and I know that Donna Juanita still has some olive oil left."

"How splendid!" said Cecco. "I wonder if I could carry the poor little fellow if you help me to lift him—or perhaps we can carry him more comfortably between us."

And thus they staggered along, the fawn, knowing that they only wanted to help him, snuggled down peacefully in their arms, till they reached the camp, when Cecco and Mietto, both talking together, told of the sad plight in which they had found him.

"And Mietto is going to make an ointment which will cure him so that he can run as fleetly as ever," finished Cecco.

"But that will mean staying several days in this place," said Messer Mathieu rather glumly, for he liked good things to eat.

"What of it?" Donna Juanita reassured him. "We have plenty of provisions, and it does not matter on what particular day we arrive in Aix. But it will matter much to the

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fawn if his hoof does not get healed. With winter coming on a lame animal will find it hard to find food."

So, without waiting to share the midday broth, Cecco and Mietto each took a hunk of bread and a piece of cheese and, after tethering the fawn to a tree some little distance from the camp where the noise would not frighten him, they went off to look for the particular roots and herbs that Mietto needed for her ointment.

When they had found them all at last they returned, and Mietto pounded the roots and brewed them with the herbs over the fire. Then she mixed the brewing with the olive oil that Donna Juanita gave her, and, tearing off a piece of her shift, she bound up the injured hoof. After that the fawn seemed to trust her and love her, and Mietto loved to leave the merry party around the fire to visit her little patient, who very soon, recognizing her footsteps, whinnied with joy and nuzzled up to her when she came.

On one such visit she heard a slight rustling in the bushes, and there was the fawn's mother, a beautiful brown doe, gazing at them both with wistful eyes. After that, morning and evening, the doe came to visit her child, and soon she allowed Mietto to fondle her also. Mietto recognized with joy that, even though she was not a gypsy herself, she could make the wild animals love and trust her. In a few days the swelling had completely gone, and Cecco decided



THE DOE CAME TO VISIT HER CHILD

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that, when the mother doe came as usual, they must untie the fawn and set him at liberty.

"Oh," said Mietto, her eyes filling with tears at the thought of losing her little pet, "couldn't we take him with us? I would care for him so tenderly."

But Cecco said: "Do you think he would like the hot, dusty roads in exchange for the cool glades of the forest, trotting tethered to the tailboard of our wagon instead of running wherever he wishes?"

Mietto realized that Cecco was right, and that she must say good-by to the little fawn whose wound they had healed. So in the evening she threw her arms for the last time around his neck and felt his sweet breath on her cheek. She also kissed the mother doe, who was nuzzling her baby, and then the two of them ran off into the forest, but not without turning to give a last glance of affection to Cecco and Mietto.

One more day and one more night they traveled through the forest, and then they came out once more upon a high-road, which was wider and far more traveled than the one they had left on entering the forest. They were continually meeting or passing someone now, tall men-at-arms riding on chargers, mules hung with little bells, two mules in front and two behind, bearing a litter between them. Through the window of the litter they could see a noble dame dressed in fine damask and satin, her towering head-

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dress hiding her hair completely. Such a litter would be followed by a large retinue of servants dressed in bright livery, and laughing and joking together to while away the tedium of the journey. They passed stout abbots riding on palfreys, peddlers with donkeys and sumpter mules, peasants on foot, all of whom cast a curious glance at the three children riding on the tailboard of the gypsy cart, and especially at Mietto's golden hair blowing about her face. They all called out a friendly greeting in answer to her happy smile.

They visited more towns and villages, again they gave their entertainment in the public square and were rewarded by the laughter of the crowds and by handfuls of copper coins. And at last one day, from the brow of a hill, they saw beside a great river a city of towering spires—they were in sight of Aix!

CHAPTER VIII

THE GOOD KING RENÉ

It did not take them long to reach the wide common outside the city walls where traveling peddlers, jongleurs and other homeless folk were allowed to camp. There was plenty of company there for Donna Juanita's caravan. Groups of donkeys and sumpter mules were tethered to trees, and here and there tents had been set up, in front of which women could be seen cooking over their fires and calling out to the children who were playing near by. There were two other wagons also, painted with bright colors, and one of them was hung all over with pots and pans.

Niccolo drove up with a great flourish of his whip, and a man put his head out of the tinsmith-wagon window and called out a greeting in the gypsy language that Mietto could not understand. Here were gypsy folk that dealt in tinware instead of music and dancing! When Cecco and Toumas had unhitched the horses and tethered them to a tree—Long Niccolo was too busy gossiping with his old friend to give them any aid—Donna Juanita said: "I know you children are yearning to explore the city; run along and take Mietto with you, and you can announce a performance for this afternoon."

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"Well said." Cecco grinned as he gave his grandmother a kiss. "Toumas and I will strap our stilts on and startle the good burghers as we tower above them!"

Although Mietto had grown accustomed to watching Cecco and Toumas prance about on their tall stilts while they were practising their new accomplishment, she found it very odd to be walking beside them, and she had to tilt her head back whenever she wanted to talk to them. As soon as they entered the city gates everybody stopped to stare at them—stilts were a great novelty in those parts and very few jongleurs as yet had practised walking and dancing on them.

The narrow streets were crowded with people, for they had entered Aix by the Gate of the Shopkeepers quarter and were now in the Street of the Shoemakers. As Cecco explained to Mietto, in a big city like Aix every trade has its own street. The street was lined with shops with open fronts, shoes and boots of the finest dyed leather were hung out in front of them. Every shoemaker sought to display his wares, and the apprentices continually stood in front of the booths, shouting at the top of their lungs: "Good sirs, good sirs, buy your shoes here! Nowhere else will you find such workmanship, such fine leather, such marvelous designs. Stop here, good sirs, and look at our beautiful boots and shoes!"

And sometimes even, if a likely-looking customer ap-

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peared, two or three apprentices from rival shops would rush up and seize him and try to pull him to their different counters—the din was appalling, for it generally happened that the one who shouted the loudest would catch the client.



When Cecco and Toumas were seen at the end of the street, towering above the crowd on their high stilts, the shouting stopped for a moment and the apprentices all stood with open mouths while Cecco announced the entertainment

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to be given that afternoon. No trade could be lost, however, and the shouting began again in a moment, so that Cecco and Toumas could not make themselves heard. They had to tap on the second-story windows and call out to those inside: "Won't you come and see us dance?" to the astonishment of the good housewives who rushed to their windows when they saw the boys' roguish faces looking in on them. They crossed themselves when they saw their elongated legs, and marveled: "Can they be boys or are they demons?"

As they approached a cross street the noise became even louder, for added to the shouts was the clang of metal. This was the Street of the Swordmakers, and in order to show the superiority of their wares the apprentices smote the steel together with resounding clangs. The sweet and savory smells would have been enough to advertise the wares of the pastry cooks and bakers, once they had entered that street; and Cecco and Toumas wrinkled up their noses as the fragrance rose to them. They could not see what was displayed on the counters, but they could smell, and their mouths watered.

"I suggest," said Cecco, as they turned out of the Street of the Pastry Cooks into a broad square lined on all sides with churches and palaces, "that we give an entertainment ourselves now, and we'll surely earn some coppers; then we'll return to the street we have just left and Toumas



MIETTO DANCED BEFORE THE KING'S PALACE.

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and I will unbuckle our stilts and descend to the ground. I want to discover just what it was that smelt so good!"

He took his reed pipe out of his pocket and began to play. This was the signal for Mietto to dance, and she put all her thoughts into that dance—the music that the birds had taught her in the green glades of the forest, her affection for the little fawn, when, his foot healed, he had bounded off with his mother, her happiness in the wild life she had been leading with the jongleurs, her longing that the citizens of Rouchoun should learn to be happy too, and her joy that at last she had reached Aix where she would surely meet the good King René and learn where the Golden Goat was to be found. But little did she think that the good King René himself was watching her at that moment from a window of his palace and marveling at the beauty of her dancing, which expressed all the joyousness and gayety that made everybody love her.

It was not till Cecco stopped his music and moved among the crowd, holding out his cap and saying: "Lighten your purses, good citizens, for we have danced and now we are hungry," that a page, beautifully dressed in pale blue and silver, came out of the palace gate and made his way to Mietto.

"My lord the king," he said, "desires to speak with you and your companions. Will you follow me?"

It did not take Cecco and Toumas long to unfasten their

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stilts; and, feeling very shy and embarrassed, they followed Mietto and the page into the palace and up some stairs to a small room where an old man with white hair and a sweet expression was standing near the window.

He turned, as the page bowed low and said: "Sire, I have brought you the jongleurs as you commanded."

"Well, my children," the king said, "I wished to see you to thank you for the entertainment you have given me. Are these two boys veritably the same giants who towered high above the crowd and played such sweet music? And you, my sweet child," turning to Mietto, "where did you learn to dance so wonderfully, and where did you acquire those blue eyes and that golden hair when your brothers are of such dark complexion?"

"She is not of our race, sir," said Cecco quickly. "We found her alone on the roadside beyond the forest; she said she was on her way to Aix in order to find and have speech with the good King René."

The king smiled. "And you gave her hospitality on the way? Well, now that you have found me, what have you to say to me? Sit here on this footstool. My young page, Raoul, will see to the refreshment of your companions."

So Mietto sat down and, looking up into his kind blue eyes, she told him everything, all about her father and her mother and her three brothers and how they did not like any laughter and gayety, how she was always wearying and

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shocking them against her will. She told him about the gloomy city of Rouchoun and its sad inhabitants whose greatest joy in life seemed to be to creep into bed when the day's work was finished. Then she told him of the visit of *Sieur Gervais* and the story of the Golden Goat, how she had come to search for him to obtain the boon of happiness for all the dwellers in Rouchoun. But she had not found him yet, though sometimes here and sometimes there she had heard tell of him on the road, how such a one had once known another who had seen the Golden Goat. As yet she had met none who could tell her where he was to be found; but many had said to her: "The good King René will know."

King René looked very thoughtful. "There is much to marvel at in what you have told me," he said. "Though I have lost my other kingdoms I have made it my ambition to make my people here known as the happiest people in the world. To that end I have brought men from far lands to show them how best to plant their fields, to build markets and bridges and fountains in every village, and cottages for the peasants. To that end, too, I have written songs and planned pageants and festivals and masques and pastorals, not only for the courtiers but for the village folk, the artisans, and all who work with their hands.

"I have pictured them working happy and content in their fields and vineyards, at their looms and their lasts

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and in their workshops, and, when the day's work is done, singing and dancing under the olive trees. I grieve to hear that in this fair land of Provence, so blest by nature that we hardly know the rigors of winter, a whole city is given up to gloom and melancholy. Yet I have long known the name of Rouchoun." And King René rose from his seat and went to a cabinet from which he took an exquisite goblet of pale crystal. As soon as he brought it into the sunlight it glowed and sparkled with all the colors of the rainbow.

"The crystal that this goblet is fashioned from," said King René, "came from your mountains near Rouchoun and was found in the rocks by one of the sad citizens you tell me of. I myself have done much carving on rock crystal, and the most beautiful of all the crystals come from Rouchoun. It seems strange that these jewels which love and cherish the sunlight and reflect it in its prismatic colors, should be found in places where the sun rarely penetrates, and have to wait till they are brought to sunnier climes before they can reach the apex of their beauty.

"Indeed I do not wonder, Mietto, that you wished to leave your cold, dark city in the hills to find the warmth and beauty that the sun sheds over all, and that you wish to bring back the secret of joy to your poor, sad people. But as for your tale of the Golden Goat, I fear I cannot help you at this time. I have lived more than sixty years longer

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on this earth than you have, yet you have seen and conversed with many people who know all about him and have even known those who have seen this mystic being—and I have never even heard of him!

“But do not be downcast, I will do all I can to help you. I will make inquiries of all the wise men in Provence from Arles to Carcassonne, in every walk of learning, and so we must soon know all there is to be learned of the Golden Goat. In the meantime you shall stay in the palace. My little granddaughter, Marguerite, will welcome you as a playmate and companion of her studies.”

Mietto listened to the king with mixed feelings. Her disappointment was great that the good and wise King René could not tell her all that she wanted to know at once; but she already loved the kind-hearted king and knew that she would be very happy studying and playing with the little princess while she waited for news of the Golden Goat. She felt sad too at the thought of leaving the jongleurs, who had been so kind to her.

While she was trying to tell King René something of her feeling for the jongleurs and how good they had been to her, the page, Raoul, appeared followed by Cecco and Toumas, whose delighted expressions together with the crumbs on their tunics, seemed to show that they would no longer have the temptation of spending the coppers they had earned in the Street of the Pastry Cooks.

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King René put his arm around Cecco and drew him toward him. "Mietto has told me," he said, "how you have watched over her, and how happy you have made her; but you must realize that she was not born to travel with jongleurs without home or country. She has a father and a mother and she has the duties of her position that she must learn to perform. As for the Golden Goat which she has been seeking, I intend to make all inquiries concerning it. But it will take time, and while we wait I have decided that it would be better for Mietto to remain in the palace and continue her education as a companion to my little granddaughter."

Cecco looked very solemn and grown-up. "Yes, indeed," he said. "We will gladly leave Mietto in your majesty's care. We only urged her to join our company as she too was going to Aix and had no other protectors."

"Doubtless she will miss you sadly," said the king. "And that thought leads me to ask you if your company would change its plans and, instead of journeying to Spain, stay the winter here in Aix where you could see Mietto from time to time? Should you agree to this, I will promise that you shall give a performance once a week at the palace."

Cecco's eyes sparkled; he knew that this would mean their fortune would be made, for only the jongleurs of high degree were wont to perform before kings and courts. Then his face grew serious as he thought of the orange

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groves of Seville and Andalusia—no, neither he nor Donna Juanita nor Long Niccolo, nor even Messer Mathieu and the gentle Suzetto would dream of spending a whole winter in the narrow streets of Aix when they might be journeying happily along the white roads of Spain—not for all the king's favor and all the money in the world. He knew very well what his grandmother's answer would be. But he only smiled and thanked the king courteously; then he and Toumas said good-by to Mietto, and King René told him to arrange with his grandmother for a performance at the palace the next day.

Mietto felt very sad when she saw the door close on Cecco and Toumas, who seemed so much more like brothers to her than Louvis, Guibert and Léoun. King René seemed to understand her feelings, but he only took her hand and pressed it for a moment. Then he said: "I shall send a messenger to the count, your father, for he must have had great anxiety concerning the fate of his only daughter. But I will tell him that you shall stay here at the palace for a while to be educated with my granddaughter, and that I will do all that I can to aid you in your quest. Now we will go and find Queen Jehanne and the little Marguerite."

And he led her into a large room which overlooked the garden, where a sweet-faced woman was bending over an embroidery frame. Beside her sat a little girl who, Mietto realized, must be the Princess Marguerite of Anjou.

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"Sweet Jehanne," said King René, "I bring you the little Countess Mietto of Rouchoun, who will spend some months under our care; thus Marguerite will gain a sister and you another little daughter."

Marguerite jumped up: "Oh, how lovely you are, with your golden hair!" she said. "I know that we will be friends."

As for Queen Jehanne, she took Mietto in her arms and kissed her on the forehead.

The king said: "Mietto has traveled a long distance on a strange quest, and her garments are worn and unsuitable for the court. Perhaps, Jehanne, you can arrange a wardrobe for her; so I will leave you now, and later we can talk of this together."

Marguerite stood shoulder to shoulder with Mietto. "But we are exactly the same height," she said joyfully. "You will be able to wear my dresses and perhaps some day I can wear yours. For, truth to tell, I like yours best, for one could play and climb far better in your short kirtle."

Marguerite could hardly contain her delight that she should have Mietto for her playmate and companion. She showed Mietto her dolls, for she still loved them, though she confessed that she was growing far too old for them. Mietto marveled at these toys, for she had never had any dolls at all, and these were lifelike and beautiful, for King René had made them and painted them himself for his little



MIETTO AND THE PRINCESS WENT DOWN THE STONE STAIRWAY

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granddaughter. Marguerite introduced her to her little lap dog, Bergeronne, and to her parrot, who was called Abdul and who could say "Bon jour," and "N'oubliez moi!"

But Marguerite's nurse was calling them now. And, later, when a page came to announce that it was the hour for dinner, the princess and Mietto went hand in hand together down the big stone stairway. Mietto was dressed in a long, flowing robe of daffodil-yellow velvet and her hair was braided and wound in a ring over each ear, with a circlet of gold around her forehead, as befitted the young Countess of Rouchoun.

Having worn a short peasant dress for so many months, she found the long skirt very irksome; but Marguerite whispered to her: "Never mind; when I am playing in the garden, I kilt up my skirts and then I can run and even climb trees. Yes, I can climb as high as Raoul, for all that I must wear skirts and he doesn't."

CHAPTER IX

THE COURT AT AIX

Mietto soon became accustomed to the life of the court, new though everything was to her. From the time that she woke up in the morning in her big bed, upheld by slender gilded poles carved with grape vines, till at night she crept into it again, every hour was filled with pleasant happenings and her eyes and ears with beautiful sights and sounds.

On the farm and in the forest and while wandering through the pleasant countryside Mietto had learned to love the beauties of nature, the trees, the flowers, the blueness of distant hills, the patterns made on the ground by sunlight filtering through the leaves; she had learned to love the music that the birds made, the music of the cowbells in the evening, of the tinkling water of brooks and of the wind soughing through the trees. Now she was to learn to know the beauty made by man.

For Aix was a beautiful city with tall buildings, palaces and churches lifting their towers to the sky and decorated inside and outside with wonderful carving and gilding and pictures. In the palace itself everything around had been carefully chosen for its harmony of shape or color or design. Beautiful furniture, carved in exquisite designs, flag-

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ons and goblets, each a work of art in itself, rich brocades and tapestries embroidered with landscapes and figures—in every room in the palace Mietto found something to admire and to wonder at.

King René loved all beautiful things and encouraged the craftsmen and artisans of his kingdom to vie with each other in creating works of artistic triumph. Not only did he encourage works of genius in others, but he produced them himself; for King René was an artist and a poet. Mietto never tired of looking at the beautiful pictures he painted and listening to the poems he had written. But it was the pictures she loved best of all, especially those that he painted in a thick parchment book, as illustrations for either a book of hours, a psalter or one of his own long poems. How Mietto wished that she could take a brush and some paint and fill a book with pictures of all the beautiful things she had seen, not only on the road and in the forest but in Aix and in the palace! She could take it back with her to Rouchoun and show them how beautiful the world was beyond the stony mountains.

One day she took a pencil and some parchment and tried to draw a picture of the fertile farm where she had stayed with Dame Isabeau, Père Marius, Elizo and Janne-toun. But her fingers would not obey her mind and she could only draw a few straggly lines that looked like nothing at all. When she told King René of her attempt he

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smiled and told her that he had studied for years before he was able to make his pencil draw the things that he wished. "But I will teach you," he said, "as long as you stay here. And as for the book that you wish to fill with pictures illustrating your adventures—I will help you with it. I will make the drawings as you describe them to me, and you shall put on the color, which is not so difficult if you use care and application."

Mietto was enchanted at this offer, and then and there the king sat down and made a picture of Rouchoun and the great rock towering above it just as Mietto described it to him. Then he called for paints and brushes and showed Mietto how to put the color on very carefully so that it should not go over the edges of the lines.

Every day Mietto and King René worked on this book; he drew pictures of the farm and the autumn landscape, of the jongleurs and of the villages she had passed; he made a picture of the wounded fawn, too, and its mother; and Mietto put on the color. In time she even learned to make some of the drawings—the flowers that grew by the wayside and little trees and houses.

Other lessons she had also, for she shared the studies of Princess Marguerite. And indeed it was time she did so; for alas, Mietto was very ignorant of nearly all that a well-born maiden of her years should know. She knew a little Latin and she had learned by heart many fables and

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philosophic maxims; but, except for this, her learning amounted to nothing at all. But now Mietto's education began in earnest under the tuition of Messer Guinoun, an old troubadour who had grown too infirm with rheumatism to wander about any more from castle to castle. He had found a home in King René's palace, and was tutor to the Princess Marguerite, who, though she was a year younger, knew far more than Mietto.

And patiently, sweetening the studies that were tedious with merry tales and anecdotes, he taught them how to read and to write in Latin and French and Provençal; and how to make elegant rhymes in all these languages, paying due attention to rhythm and measure. He taught them to recite the ballads and romances which celebrate the gallant deeds of long ago, and he taught them how to play on the harp so that they could accompany their songs themselves.

Mietto studied with a will, storing her mind with the stories of the princess who became a shepherdess, of Flamenca and the Bridge of Avignon, of Gaspard de Besse—and she smiled at the thought of how she would beguile the long winter evenings at Rouchoun with these lovely songs of long ago. True, the count and countess and her brothers had shown no great appreciation of the songs of the Sieur de Pontaves; but she believed that, if she could find the Golden Goat and could persuade him to give her one of his

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golden hairs, all who belonged to her, her family and her city, would gain the secret of enjoyment and happiness.

Mietto even learned to use her needle, but it was a very different thing from the long seams that she had sewed on her brothers' shirts. One day she found Queen Jehanne working at an enormous tapestry frame, and she gasped at the beauty of her labor; for the queen was making a picture like one of King René's paintings, but she was using wool instead of paint. It showed a group of pretty girls dancing on a flower-strewn meadow, and you could tell the different flowers—vervain, plumbago and meadowsweet, narcissi and blue hyacinths.

"Oh," said Mietto, as she watched Queen Jehanne's needle fly in and out, adding bit by bit to the picture, "I never *knew* that one could make beautiful things like that with a needle! My mother and her ladies sew all the time and would be glad if I should do so too; but they only make useful things that are dark and ugly, kirtles and robes and shifts and shirts, and all of sad color or black. I do not like to make ugly, useful things."

"But useful things can be beautiful also," said Queen Jehanne. "This tapestry, I hope, will serve to keep out the drafts when the winter winds come howling around the palace. And as for kirtles and robes and coifs, they can be made most beautiful of all. Look at the robe Marguerite is embroidering. She made the design last summer from



QUEEN JEHANNE WAS WORKING ON A TAPESTRY

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the roses that grew in her garden in Tarascon. And, now that it is winter and the roses are faded, Marguerite can still look at them ornamenting the hem of her robe. I will teach you to embroider, and then perhaps you will follow your mother's wishes in using your needle, and yet find it a happy task."

You can be sure that Mietto was glad to be taught by her kind and beautiful queen; not only would she enjoy embroidering beautiful designs herself, but she would be able to show her mother and her ladies how to make even the dullest fabrics beautiful with designs and pictures of silk and wool.

Mietto and Marguerite did not work all day at their studies, their embroidery and painting. There were still many hours, as they rose early, for playing in the garden. There was time, nearly every day, for them to ride outside the city, each mounted on her own little palfrey; and every day at dusk King René and his court were wont to forgather in the big banqueting hall and listen to the songs of Messer Guinoun and the merry jokes and quips of Tibourlet, King René's favorite jester.

On one occasion, when Messer Guinoun was singing his most tragic song, Tibourlet began to imitate him behind his back, causing the old troubadour to wonder why everyone should be convulsed with laughter when they should have been dissolved in tears. Then, in a mirror he caught a

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glimpse of the malicious jester, and, with quick wit, altered his song to a lampoon on Tibourlet, and the laughter was all turned against the jester.



These entertainments usually ended with a dance, and the lords and ladies of the court would join together in the intricate steps of the tourdion, when the lady and her partner, standing opposite each other, advanced and re-

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tired, bowing and curtsying much to Mietto's delight. She loved to practice the steps with the Princess Marguerite for her partner.

And once a week, for as long as they remained at Aix, Dame Juanita and her band of jongleurs, even as King René had promised, came to the palace and gave an entertainment, earning much applause and many a gold piece. Mietto was always happy to see her friends; for, now and again, amid all the glory and splendor of the palace, she found herself missing the wild, free life of the gypsy wagon.

Cecco and Toumas often came to play with her on sunny afternoons in the big garden of the palace, and Marguerite and Mietto, with their long skirts kilted to their knees, would run and jump with them along the garden walks. Raoul and the other pages liked to join them when they were free from their duties, and they would not be contented till they had strapped on Cecco's and Toumas's tall stilts, but they found the art more difficult than it seemed and all got bad tumbles.

But one sad day the whole company appeared, even the little Rosita, for it was to say good-by. As Cecco had prophesied, they were already weary of staying in one place, even though it was as beautiful as Aix, and their hearts yearned for the white road that leads into Spain. Mietto was sorry to see the last of her friends; but Christmas was

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approaching, and there were so many preparations to make that there was no time for regrets.

The great hall had to be decorated with mistletoe, and Marguerite and Mietto were allowed to go with the pages, accompanied by two men-at-arms, to search for it on the slopes of Mont Victoire. The whole week before the great festival there were ever-increasing activities in the kitchen under the direction of the housekeeper, Dame Anita; and Marguerite and Mietto must spend an hour or so every day in learning the mystery of pastry-making. For how can a noble maiden superintend her servitors if she does not know how to prepare such delicacies herself? Dame Anita was a comfortable body, as befitted her calling, and while waiting for this pot to come to a boil or for that to cool, she would entertain her young apprentices with many pleasant tales of fairy lore.

At last came the day before Christmas. Early in the morning the mayor and the corporation of Aix, attired in their robes of office, came in solemn procession to present good King René with the Yule log. It was of such majestic size that it had to be borne on the shoulders of four stout apprentices; but even so it was not too big, for the royal Yule log must last from Christmas Eve till Epiphany to make sure of peace and prosperity for the whole year. And at Epiphany the ashes would be taken and strewn in the gardens and the vineyards so that the earth of the whole



"IS THIS A GIANT RIDING UP THE STREET?"

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of Provence should be fertile and yield its utmost. But first Dame Anita always took a handful to put in a bag, which she would store in the linen closet as a protection against fire.

When the Yule log was lit with solemn ceremony the Christmas season had really begun. Another ceremony Marguerite and Mietto had to perform, as they were the children of the palace, and that was to hang sheaves of corn from the crenelated bastions so that the birds should share in the Christmas feast.

The festivities lasted as long as the Yule log did, and every day brought a different diversion. One day there was a mystery play given by the apprentices of Aix, the next a pastorelle given by Queen Jehanne's young maidens from the convent beyond the city walls, where they were taught embroidery and fine sewing.

But amid all the gayety and rejoicing the poor were not forgotten. "Marguerite! Is this a giant riding up the street?" Mietto cried when she first saw the good King Melchior, as she stood on the balcony of the palace that overlooked the shopmen's quarters. King Melchior was indeed of enormous size, and he was made of wicker work and had a handsomely painted face; he was tied to his donkey's back between two panniers, which did not prevent him from swaying backward and forward as the donkey

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jogged along, so that he seemed always to be bowing to the crowd that followed and accompanied him.

All day long the good King Melchior made his rounds, while the varlets who accompanied him rang their bells and sang out: "Remember the poor, remember the poor!" And every house he stopped at gave him of their best—almonds and figs, joints of venison, meat pies and pasties, which, when the king had finished his rounds, were collected on a table in front of the church, where anyone who so desired could come and receive his share of the delicacies. How different it all was from Rouchoun, Mietto thought, where even Christmas was a dreary festival with no feasting and rejoicing whether for rich or poor!

Spring comes early in Provence; and spring had come when King René decided to give a tournament, a small one and informal, inviting only those knights and nobles who lived not far from Aix, in order to teach the young princess and Mietto how to conduct themselves as gracious hostesses in such an assembly. So workmen were soon busy from early dawn to nightfall erecting tents and pavilions to house the royal guests on the wide stretch of common where the peddlers and jongleurs sometimes camped. The pavilions were erected, the lists were made ready; and at last one bright day early in March, when the almond trees and the mimosa were in full bloom, the knights began to arrive

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astride their chargers and followed by their company of squires and pages.

Marguerite and Mietto would have liked to spend the whole day hanging over the battlements on the city walls watching the various groups arrive, spring off their horses and wander about among the tents examining all the arrangements for their comfort and entertainment. But they had other and more important things to do. For the knights who were to take part in the tournament had always to choose the Queen of Beauty who was to give away the prizes at the end of the contest. And by unanimous consent they had decided that this year there should be two, the Princess Marguerite and the Countess Mietto! They were chosen not only as a token of love and affection for King René, but also because the fame of Mietto's beauty and gayety and the sweet graciousness of the young princess had been spread abroad by the nobles who had visited the palace.

For days before the tournament all the usual lessons were forgotten, and instead Messer Guinoun devoted long hours to teaching the two little girls how to conduct themselves in their important rôle. And at last the day arrived! Long before it was time Mietto and Marguerite were dressed in their long robes of white brocade, decorated with blue ribbons and embroidery of blue and gold, ready for the ceremony of bringing in the champion's crest. And when

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they were hardly able to bear the excitement of waiting any longer, their maids of honor appeared dressed in full state robes with towering coifs on their heads and glittering with jewels.

They conducted the two Queens of Beauty to the audience chamber, where a procession of the pages of the different knights awaited them, each dressed in his master's colors, and the lord of ceremonies handed to Marguerite and Mietto a white samite cushion on which reposed the champion's crest. This was a golden crown with three white heron feathers. The procession formed in line. First walked four heralds, who blew their trumpets and called aloud: "Make way for the Queens of Beauty, make way for the Queens of Beauty!" Marguerite and Mietto followed, carrying the samite cushion between them, and the pages and ladies came after. Thus they advanced to the royal pavilion, where the guests were already assembled; and all arose when the two queens appeared and King René handed them to their throne, which was fortunately quite wide enough for the two of them.

Then the heralds went out among the avenues of tents, blowing their trumpets and calling: "Jousts make ready, jousts make ready!" And the knights came forth to ride in procession before the tournament began. Again the heralds rode first, then a jongleur riding on horseback and playing with his sword, whirling it up high into the air

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and catching it again. After him came the knights themselves, about twenty of them; they rode down each side of the lists, bowing low before King René and Queen Jehanne and lower still before the Queens of Beauty. And everybody cheered and shouted, the noble guests in the pavilions and the burghers and the apprentices in the outer enclosure, where by craning their necks they could see as well as anybody. When they had all gone past King René arose and announced: "The tournament is open!"

Immediately two knights rode into the lists and began to fence with their tournament lances, which were made of wood. Each was striving to unseat the other; but before the stronger could succeed many lances were broken, and there were many shouts of encouragement from the burghers and apprentices and even some shrieks of excitement from the ladies in the pavilions. When a knight succeeded in unseating the other, two more knights took their place; and thus the duel went on all day, with a short interval for refreshment when pages passed among the pavilions with cakes and wine, and an enormous hogshead of beer was opened for the guests in the outer enclosure.

Marguerite and Mietto watched the combat with great excitement. Of course they had each chosen a favorite knight at the time that the procession of knights passed in front of the king's dais. Marguerite's knight was clad in bright armor with a pale blue surtout that matched the

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ribbons on her dress. But Mietto, curiously enough since she was such a lover of bright colors, had chosen for her champion a tall slender knight clad in black armor with a silver shield painted with a design of brilliant poppies.

Though this was their first tournament Miëtto and Marguerite had chosen well their champions—for time and again Sir Blaise and Sir Aymeris, the black knight and the blue one, appeared in the lists and unseated their opponents. At last the time came when they must enter the lists together to decide who was the final victor. The friendly battle raged between them; lance after lance was splintered, and still neither could succeed in unhorsing the other. Then Sir Blaise, the knight who was clad in black, raised his lance on high and, pushing back the visor of his helmet to show the laughter in his dark eyes, cried: "There are two Queens of Beauty, so why should there not be two victors in the tourney?"

The nobles and ladies in the pavilion shouted their applause, which the burghers and apprentices answered with roars of appreciation. Then King René hastily took off his golden necklet and Queen Jehanne added three heron plumes which she plucked from her fan and attached to the necklet with a blue and scarlet ribbon. Now there were two victor's crests upon the samite cushion, and all the guests agreed that no Queens of Beauty could have surpassed the grace and charm with which Marguerite and



MIETTO AND MARGUERITE CROWNED THE CHAMPIONS.

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Mietto crowned the two champions. When Mietto handed the crest to Sir Blaise he lifted his head and looked at her and smiled, and she knew why she had chosen him for her champion—he made her think of Louvis, her brother, who might have looked just such a gallant knight had he ever known what it was to smile!

After the tournament there was a great feast to which all were invited. "Verily," said Tibourlet, the king's jester, passing among the tables where all who had fought were feasting, "no knight who has fought in *this* tournament need respond; for not two merely but all of you have won the crest. Yea, the black knight and the blue have won, and are you not all black and blue now beneath your silk and velvet?"

CHAPTER X

ON BOARD THE KING'S BARGE

But Mietto had not forgotten her quest of the Golden Goat. Always at night before she went to sleep she thought of him and sometimes he would appear to her in her dreams, and she would hear the patter of his hoofs as he came bounding past—but always when she tried to catch him she would awake. During the months that she had lived in the royal palace at Aix, King René had said nothing more of his promise to consult the wise men of Provence concerning the secret lair of the Golden Goat. But Mietto trusted him and knew that he was doing all in his power to help her in her quest.

And one day, when they were working together on her book, he said to her: "Rest from your work, my child, for I wish to talk to you; sit on this footstool beside me." The king took one of the strands of her golden hair and wound it round his finger, as he loved to do, while he told her that he had done all that he had promised; he had sent messengers to all the wise men, the learned abbots, astrologers, alchemists—not only of Provence but of Burgundia and Touraine and Anjou and even as far north as Paris. But the reply was always the same: "The Golden Goat was

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nothing but a myth handed down from the ancient days, believed in, it was true, by ignorant peasants, sung of by poets and troubadours, but having no real existence. The proof of this lay in that, though one might meet here and there a man who would claim to have met and spoken with some other one who had seen the Golden Goat and gained happiness and prosperity thereby, one never met a single person who actually himself had seen him."

"But be comforted, my child," said the kind king. "Stay here with us and share the life and studies of my granddaughter until your education is finished, when some noble youth will ask for your hand in marriage, and you will become chatelaine of a fair demesne and spend your life showering happiness on all around you. I believe that the count, your father, will gladly agree to this; for, though he may be sad and melancholy, he has your welfare truly at heart. And you know that there is nothing you can do for the poor, gloomy citizens—if there had been, they would have more valued your presence among them."

But Mietto would not be comforted; she did not want to make people happy who were already happy, who lived in sunshine all the year around and loved their work and enjoyed their play—it was to the people of Rouchoun she wanted to teach the secret of happiness, and she thought that she knew that the Golden Goat alone could help her. But now it seemed there was no Golden Goat! All that day

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Mietto was very sad and silent, to the amazement of all who had never seen her without an eager smile on her face.



And in the afternoon, when she was helping Dame Anita make a game pie, suddenly her tears began to fall. Faster and faster they fell, much to Dame Anita's horror, for her

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first thought was for the lightness of her pastry, her second for Mietto's grief.

"What is it, sweet child?" she asked, folding Mietto to her capacious bosom after she had carefully removed the bowl out of reach of her tears.

So Mietto told her all about it. She described the sunless valley and its gloomy people, and how she had heard tell of the Golden Goat, who, if she could only catch a glimpse of him and find one of his golden hairs, would give joy and prosperity not only to her but to all belonging to her. And as Rouchoun was her city, why, if she saw the Golden Goat, it would bring happiness and prosperity to all who lived there! So she had come to search for him, and King René had asked all the wise men of the kingdom where he was to be found—but their reply was always the same, that there *was* no Golden Goat.

"Learned men are often oddly lacking in wisdom," said Dame Anita. "Much poring over their manuscripts and books doubtless affects their sight so that they cannot see what is close to them. Of course the Golden Goat exists. If he did not how could it happen that so many believe in him? Ignorant peasants indeed! Mayhap the shepherds are ignorant of Greek and Latin, but they know the wisdom of the stars—and *they* believe in the Golden Goat. My brother is a shepherd, and he has often told me of an old shepherd in the hills called Guilhoun of whom it is said by

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all: 'He has seen the Golden Goat! He has found one of his golden hairs and carries it always on his person!'

"This old shepherd is full of wisdom and gentleness; there is not a question that he cannot answer. He can tell when it will rain and when the first snowfall will come; and he will say: 'In two weeks the almond trees will blossom.' And in two weeks verily they are all in bloom! He knows where the grass is greenest; so his sheep are the plumpest, with the thickest wool of any sheep in Provence. Not only has he prospered and grown strong in wisdom and happiness, but his sons also and their sons, and even the little children who are his great-grandsons, they are stronger and healthier and happier than any other children. Now how could all this be if he had not seen the Golden Goat?

"You must go to Tarascon for the Feast of the Shepherds, when they all come down from the hills with their sheep for the ceremony of the blessing of the lamb; and then you could have speech with him and it may be he will tell you all he knows."

Now indeed Mietto recovered her cheerfulness; she gave a joyful laugh, hugged Dame Anita, and rushed back to King René's cabinet.

"The learned men must be wrong," she cried, when she was still in the doorway. "I have been speaking to Dame Anita, and she says it is the shepherds who know all about the Golden Goat. And she says that there is one called

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Guilhoun of whom they say that he has seen the Golden Goat and wears one of his golden hairs! The shepherds come down from the hills to Tarascon each year for the Feast of the Blessing of the Lamb. Do you think that I could go to Tarascon? And then I could speak to Guilhoun and he would tell me if he has really seen the Golden Goat!"

"It is true," said King René thoughtfully, "that the shepherds are said to be the wisest of men; living all alone on the hilltops their thoughts are not hampered by trivial details of life, and by communing with the stars they learn many things that we who live at court find hard to understand. Next week we go to Tarascon to be present at the Game of the Tarasque; and, as Dame Anita told you, the last of the ceremonies is the blessing of the lamb. This is the shepherds' own festival, and all who can come strive to be there. You shall go with us, Mietto, and meet the wise Guilhoun—thus shall this mystery of the Golden Goat be made clear."

So now the pleasant life at Aix was ended, and Mietto must perforce start on her travels again and journey to Tarascon in quest of the Golden Goat. Mietto had traveled on foot and on the tailboard of a gypsy wagon and now she was to travel by water, even as Messer Tourbasin, the alchemist, had foretold.

One day King René and Queen Jehanne and the two

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little girls, Marguerite and Mietto, with a goodly retinue of lords and ladies—not to mention a small army of kitchen wenches and scullions under the direction of Dame Anita—rode to the broad River Durance, where the royal barge awaited them which was to bear them to the king's summer palace at Tarascon. Those were delightful days, gliding along the broad river past castles and dungeon keeps and little towns and villages. Wherever they stopped for the night, the peasants and the townsmen came out to meet them, carrying garlands and baskets heaped with fruits. They strewed flowers in their path, as they disembarked to spend the night at some noble castle or stately abbey. At last they came to where the Durance flows into the Rhône, and at noon they passed under the stately bridge of Saint Benezet at Avignon.

King René laughed as he said to Mietto: "If only the little Saint Benezet had lived in Rouchoun! You would have had no need to search for your Golden Goat; he could have lifted the Rouchoun du Géant bodily and placed it somewhere in a valley where it could do no harm." And he told her the story of little Saint Benezet, who was a shepherd lad who tended his sheep up in the mountains.

One day an angel came to him and said: "Benezet, you must go to Avignon and build a bridge over the Rhône." Benezet said: "How can I go to Avignon and leave my sheep? They would stray while I am gone and get lost."

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But the angel said: "I will herd them for you while you are away. When you reach Avignon go straight to the bishop and tell him that he must give you all the help you need to build the bridge."

So Saint Benezet put on his cloak and took his shepherd's staff and walked along the hot and dusty road till he came to Avignon. It was a feast day, and the bishop and the clergy and the good folk of Avignon were holding a solemn procession through the streets. But Saint Benezet was not daunted. The angel had told him to go to the bishop the moment he arrived in Avignon and ask him to help him to build the bridge over the Rhône; so to the bishop he would go. He threaded his way through the crowd of priests in their golden copes and choir boys in blue and crimson till he came to the bishop, and he planted himself in front of him and stopped the procession.

The bishop was much displeased. "Move away, boy," he said, "do you not see that you are stopping the procession?" But Saint Benezet said: "My angel told me to come to Avignon and build a bridge over the Rhône, and he told me to come to you the moment I arrived in Avignon and ask you to help me."

Now the bishop did not believe a word of what Saint Benezet said, for he was only a little boy and did not look at all a likely person to be entrusted with such a great and important work. So, impatient to get rid of him and pro-

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ceed with the procession, and expecting to shame him before everybody, the bishop pointed to an enormous stone slab, almost as big as a house, and said: "Well, I will help you. There is the first stone. Pick it up and carry it down to the Rhône."

Then Saint Benezet stooped, picked up the stone as if it had been an apple, carried it down to the river, and put it gently down on the bank, saying: "Now, I have laid the first stone!"

Now when the bishop and the priests and all who followed the procession—the mayor and the aldermen and all the rich folk of Avignon—saw the little boy carry that enormous stone, they were amazed; and gladly they contributed money and jewels to finish the bridge, which to this day is known as the Bridge of Saint Benezet.

Long before the king had finished the story they had passed under the bridge. Soon they left the towers of Avignon behind them and at evening of the same day they arrived in Tarascon.

News that they had passed Avignon had gone before them and the whole city of Tarascon had turned out to welcome their good king. The banks were lined with people who at the first sight of the royal barge burst forth with shouts and acclamations that almost drowned the triumphant music of the fifes and drums. The royal party disembarked and rode through the flower-strewn streets to

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the palace; and, after a simple supper, Marguerite and Mietto retired early to bed.

But the next morning you may be sure that they arose early, for Marguerite was eager to show her friend all the



beauties of the marvelous gardens of Tarascon and her own private garden where roses and sweet-scented cloves, carnation lilies and verbenas were in full bloom. It was like a fairy garden; there were fountains and lakes and pools

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with water lilies floating in them and flowers growing close to the water in which they were reflected like a mirror.

Until after the Feast of the Tarasque there were to be no lessons; and, while the elders were busy with preparations for the great festival, the two children were free to roam through the gardens from early morning till evening. There were barely ten days left before the feast; and, as King René himself loved to superintend the planning of the processions and pageants and had designed the costumes which were sewn by Queen Jehanne's sewing maidens under her direction, there was much to be done.

It was Marguerite who told Mietto the story of Saint Martha and the Tarasque, and a stirring story it was. It appeared that in ancient times a terrible monster lived in the Rhône, whom people called the Tarasque. He had a dragon's head, the body of a tortoise, a long tail bristling with sharp scales, and six human legs with which he could run six times as fast as any human being. He ravaged the country all around so that it was unsafe for anyone to cross the Rhône—and in time he even became so bold that he came into the town at night and caught unwary travelers who were still abroad.

Saint Martha lived in a town by the sea, many miles away, and one day came a frightened peasant from Tarascon to tell her all about the terrible scourge—and she promised to come and deliver them from it. The only weapon

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she took with her was a cross and a stoup of holy water. She came directly to Tarascon and went down to the banks of the Rhône and called the monster. All the people of



Tarascon followed her but they climbed into trees when they saw the Tarasque. Terrible he looked by light of day, and he ran straight at Saint Martha. But Saint Martha looked him calmly in the face and sprinkled holy water on him and spoke gently to him—words that no one heard but the Tarasque!

The result was magical. The Tarasque began to puff and to blow, and he puffed and he blew all his wickedness out of him until he became as gentle and mild as a little new-born lamb. He crouched at Saint Martha's feet and rubbed his head against her knees, and she made a leash

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out of soft moss and tied it around his neck and led him up and down the banks of the river. The people came down timidly from trees and approached the monster and marvelled to see how mildly he looked at them out of the eyes that used to sparkle fire and brimstone.

At that time the people of Tarascon were still pagans, and they thought that Saint Martha was the Goddess Diana, so they fell down on their knees before her to worship her and to thank her for delivering them from the dreadful scourge that had ravaged their town. But Saint Martha told them that she was no goddess, but a servant of God, and she preached to them and they all became converted. As for the Tarasque, from that day on he remained gentle and tame and followed Saint Martha on his leash of moss like a little pet dog. In a very short time the people of Tarascon learned to be very fond of their pet Tarasque, and till he died at last of old age they continued to bring him food every day; and their children petted him and fondled his dragon ears.

And it was in memory of the brave Saint Martha and the Tarasque that every year on her feast day the people of Tarascon feasted and made merry and did honor to her. The feast lasted five days because workmen of all the different callings in Tarascon had their own day on which to honor Saint Martha. The peasants and the artisans and

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the handicraft workers, the fishermen who fished in the Rhône, and, on the last day of all, the shepherds who came down from the hills with their flocks especially for the festival.

CHAPTER XI

THE SHEPHERD'S HUT

As the festival approached, every day people flocked to Tarascon, so that it was a wonder that there was room enough in the town to accommodate them all. The inns were so overflowing that citizens threw open their barns and outhouses; and even so, there were a great number who slept out on the common, which they could well do as the weather was now warm and settled.

On the first day of the feast it was the Tarasque himself who was given all the honor. He walked at the head of a long procession with a young maiden, who represented Saint Martha, leading him on a leash of moss. He stalked majestically along on six very human legs, which sometimes stumbled and failed to keep step—and, as he walked, he bowed his head benignly from side to side. The procession marched through the streets to the church, where a service was held. Only about a quarter of the people could get into the church; the rest sat on the steps and even on the ground. As for the Tarasque he found a resting place on a stone bench by the church door; and though for the time being he seemed to have lost his legs, he had

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acquired a retinue of three stalwart men who continually mopped their overheated faces.

After the service the procession was resumed and the Tarasque found his legs again, and proceeded to the common, where long tables had been set out. These were heaped with cold viands, cakes and pastry; and everyone, even the most poor and humble, could feast to their hearts' content. Dancing, music and songs followed and, as it was moonlight, the dancing was kept up till late at night. King René and Queen Jehanne, with Marguerite and Mietto, moved among the tables; for these were King René's own particular guests and he did not return to the palace till he had greeted everyone who sat at his board.

After the feast Mietto danced for them, as she had danced with the jongleurs on many a village square; and the people shouted with applause, for never had they seen such dancing. They would have liked to watch her dance longer, but King René, seeing that she was tired, said good night to all and returned to the palace.

So the days followed, each with processions and pageants, music and songs, till the last day dawned, the day of the blessing of the lamb. Those shepherds who had been able to leave their sheep on the upland pastures under the care of some hireling had been in Tarascon from the beginning of the festival. They were easily distinguishable by their long capes. Whenever Mietto saw one she

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scanned him eagerly, hoping to recognize Guilhoun—who had seen the Golden Goat—but so far none that she had seen had seemed old enough. Many shepherds, however, had not been able to find anyone to whom they could trust their sheep; for everybody for miles around wanted to be present themselves at this, the greatest festival of the year. So these shepherds descended from the hills only on their own feast day for the blessing of the lamb, driving before them their flocks to be herded for the day on the common outside the town.

Mietto rose at dawn to watch the shepherds pass through the town, each surrounded by his own flock of sheep. Eagerly she watched each face—surely, she thought, she would recognize Guilhoun by the joy and serenity of his face. But, as they passed one by one, she could not discover one who looked more likely to be he than another, though there were many old men who passed whose faces were calm and wise. Last of all came a very tall old shepherd carrying a snow-white lamb in his arms. By his side trotted a ewe, beautifully decked with blue ribbons; her fleece also was a dazzling white. Although Mietto could not see this shepherd's face because it was hidden by the lamb he was carrying, she knew at once that this must be the ewe and the lamb that would take part in the procession.

And indeed, later in the day she recognized them both; but now the ewe was harnessed to a little cart painted silver



A LITTLE CART PAINTED SILVER

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and decorated with garlands of flowers, and in the cart sat the lamb on a bed of sweet-scented herbs and grass. Around him in the cart lay rich gifts for the church, wooden boxes curiously carved, drinking horns and flutes and mouth organs; these the shepherds had made during their long hours of leisure while herding the sheep.

Beside the little cart with the lamb walked the same shepherd. As he passed up the broad aisle of the church he looked at Mietto, and at once she knew that this was Guilhoun, who had seen the Golden Goat. His face was so peaceful and so full of a quiet joy, and so kindly was his smile when at times during the service that followed the little lamb rose anxiously to his feet and baa-ed to his mother, who would turn her head and look at him. Then the shepherd would fondle them both and the ewe would rub her head against his shoulder as he knelt, and the lamb would nestle down again peacefully among his flowers.

It was even so; for that evening, when Marguerite and Mietto were resting after the pleasures of the day under the cool shade of the trees in the palace garden, Dame Anita came to them and said that her brother and another shepherd wished to have speech with Mietto. The other shepherd was the one who had led the ewe and the lamb.

And he said to Mietto: "My little maid, I have been told that you wished to see and speak with me; but what I have to tell you cannot be spoken in towns and palaces

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where people congregate. To-morrow at dawn I return with my sheep to the upland pastures on the hills above Tarascon. If you will climb up there with me I will tell you all I know."

So the next day at dawn Mietto, accompanied by Dame Anita and her brother, for the way was long and they would have to spend the night in the shepherd's hut, climbed up the hill with the old shepherd. Again he carried the little white lamb, who, having presented the gifts of the shepherds to the church, was now returning to his pastures. The road led through olive orchards and rich tilled fields, then came forest land with its welcome shade, and at last they reached the uplands where the grass lay thick and green and as juicy as in the meadows down by the side of the river.

The shepherd set food before them and busied himself in making up a bed of thyme and lavender and soft ferns; and as he worked he spoke of this thing and that, but touched on the matter of the Golden Goat not at all. Soon the sun had set and the stars began to shine out one by one in the dark blue sky. Then the shepherd told them quaint lore about the stars—how the Milky Way is called by the shepherds the Road of Saint James, because when Charlemagne waged war against the Saracens, the great Saint James of Gaul lit the long line of lights across the sky to show him the road to Africa.



THE SHEPHERD TOLD THEM ABOUT THE STARS

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Venus, he told them, is the shepherds' own star, whom they call the beautiful Magvelone. It is she who guides them across the mountains when they take their sheep up to pasture in the summer months and when they return in late autumn to their winter quarters. The star Sirius is known as John of Milan. One day he was invited to the wedding of the beautiful Magvelone, who is married every seven years, during the conjunction of Saturn and Venus, to Peter of Provence, as the shepherds call Saturn. With him were invited the Pleiades, whom they call the Sitting Hen, and the three stars of Orion's belt who are called the Ensigns. The Sitting Hen, being very industrious, arose early and set out the first. One can easily pick her out on a starry night hurrying across the sky. The three Ensigns, being young and agile, stayed late in bed—and by the time they got up the Sitting Hen was so far ahead that they had to take a short cut.

As for John of Milan, he was lazy indeed. When at last he woke up, he also had to take the short cut, but he did not know the way. Far ahead of him he saw the three Ensigns and called to them to stop. But either they did not hear him or they were afraid they would not be able to catch up with the Sitting Hen who was hurrying so swiftly across the sky, so they did not stop. Then John of Milan threw his stick after them and one can see it in the sky

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every night. The wise men call it Fomalhaut, but the shepherds know that it is the stick of John of Milan.

Laziest of all was the poor star, the Lame One, whom we know as Antares, the star of the Scorpion. Though he goes to sleep earlier than any of the others he also gets up the latest; and on that evening he got up so late that it was time for him to go to bed again before he reached the wedding!

"And talking of going to bed," said Dame Anita, "reminds me that I am weary with the long climb, for I have more to carry than Mietto who is so small and light. My brother and I will seek our beds of lavender and ferns that you have prepared for us, and Mietto can join me when she is ready."

At last, when all was silent—the sheep having stilled the tinkling of their bells and gone to sleep as had the birds and the insects—the shepherd drew from inside his tunic a little golden amulet which he wore around his neck, and said: "You have been told, perchance, that I have seen the Golden Goat; for, though I have never told mortal man about it till this night, all men know it and say of me: 'He has seen the Golden Goat.' And they say the truth. It is known that those who have seen him must never speak of it, else they will lose the gifts that he has given them. But I am an old man, and now my sons are grown, as are their sons' sons. I have known much happiness and prosperity

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and they also; and if, for the few years that are left me, this should be taken away, it matters not overmuch.

"Yes, sixty long summers have passed since I saw him standing, looking in at the door of my hut. The sun had just risen, and his fleece glowed with such brightness that I had to cast down my eyes, and when I raised them he had gone. But I saw something sparkle and glitter on a tussock at my feet. I picked it up—and lo, it was one of his golden hairs!" Saying this he paused and opened the little box and showed Mietto a hair of pure gold.

"Day and night I have worn it," he continued, "and riches and content have come to me and to mine ever since. And perhaps wisdom also, for many things that had puzzled me were suddenly made clear and most of all those things that concern the Golden Goat. So did I know that I must never gossip and brag of having seen him. Also I must never seek to have another glimpse of him, though I have often wished for it. For he who seeks the Golden Goat will never find him as long as he is seeking. 'Tis with him even as it is with happiness. He who sets out to seek it for himself will not fail of being disappointed. 'Tis only when he seeks for the happiness of others that he will suddenly find that he has found it for himself.

"So you see, Mietto, you have made a long journey in vain. But methinks that, as your desire to see the Golden Goat and find his golden hair was to bring happiness and

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brightness to others, he may yet show himself to you some day. Gladly would I give this golden hair of mine to you if it would avail you, but it is not so. For you must see the Golden Goat and find the hair yourself before the gift has any virtue. And last, the Golden Goat, I know, appears more and more seldom to men; no longer does he wander in the rich fields of the south. He has taken to the mountains and seldom does he leave his lair in some secret valley to show himself among the haunts of men."

So now Mietto knew at last the secret of the Golden Goat, and she knew that it was of no use to search for him any further. If he willed that she should see him he would appear to her, but never as long as she sought for him. But, strangely enough, she was not discouraged. The next day, after Mietto had bidden farewell to the shepherd and thanked him for his goodness in telling her about the Golden Goat, she returned to Tarascon. The moment they arrived at the palace she went to King René and, finding him alone in his cabinet, she told him all that she had learned.

"And now," she said, "I feel that I should return to Rouchoun. I will take my beautiful book with me that shows the beauties of the world beyond the mountains, and especially the beauties that men have made with their own hands. And I will show it to everyone, and surely when they see it they will wish to make our city of Rouchoun

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beautiful as are Aix and Tarascon. Even though they cannot have trees and flowers, that need much warmth of the sun to bring forth their ripeness, they can learn to paint pictures such as you paint and look upon the semblance and be glad. And they can learn to deck our dark old church with carving and gilding and paint their houses with bright colors, and they can make music and have festivals and dance even if the sun is not shining. They can make it all light and gay with candles, and surely if they will learn all these things it will make them glad!"

King René said: "Mietto, I had hoped that you would stay with us till you were a grown maiden; but, as this is your desire, I cannot hinder you, especially as I believe that you are right. At this season of the year, though, the sun is too hot for travel. Remain here at Tarascon until the autumn, when the sun will have lost some of its heat, and I will send you back to your father's castle at Rouchoun with an escort of men at arms, and one of Queen Jehanne's ladies to bear you company."

Indeed, Mietto was glad to obey the king and stay in Tarascon for a while longer; she would have the summer months before her in which she could play with Marguerite and study and finish her book with King René's help and so have more to show to her family and the people in Rouchoun.

She and Marguerite made the most of their playtime in

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those golden summer days. With skirts kilted to their knees they roamed in the woods and waded in the cool brooks and picked flowers in the meadows. So the summer passed and the first faint gold of autumn appeared on the trees. The time had come when Mietto must start for Rouchoun.

She could hardly bear to say good-by to good King René and Queen Jehanne and Marguerite, who was like a twin sister to her. If only she could forget her sad and dismal home and stay with them always, she sometimes thought—but she knew well that she could never do that, nor ever be quite happy herself until she had done all she could to make the people of Rouchoun as joyful and gay as those who lived in the towns and villages that she had passed on her travels.

So one day beheld Mietto, mounted on her palfrey and surrounded by six stalwart men-at-arms, and the Lady Héloïse mounted also; she was the oldest and plumpest of the ladies-in-waiting to Queen Jehanne, but a kindly and merry lady for all that. Poor Marguerite burst out crying, and Queen Jehanne had tears in her eyes and King René looked very sad. She had already bade them all good-by, but now she stooped from her saddle and kissed her little playmate once more. "It is not really good-by forever," she said. "When Rouchoun holds festival in the market place and the town is hung with banners and the townsfolk



TO THE NORTH WAS THE GREAT ROUCHOUN DU GÉANT

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clad in bright attire and dancing around the bonfires, then I promise you I will ask my father's consent to come and pass some time with you again."

Then she followed the Lady Héloïse and the men-at-arms out of the palace-yard gates. Very different was her return journey toward her distant home in the mountains from the journey she made when she had set out all alone. Now knightly manors and stately convents offered her hospitality on the way, and changed the weary horses of the little company for new ones which the men-at-arms would exchange for their own on the return journey.

At last on a fair day in early October they rode up a steep mountain path, and from the summit they saw before them to the north the great bulk of the Rouchoun du Géant.

CHAPTER XII

THE GOLDEN GOAT

Yes, there stood the rock, looking stark and grim as it rose in the distance beyond the pine-clad mountains and the fertile hills near by, covered with fields and orchards. While Mietto and her escort gazed at it they became aware of a strange rumbling sound, as of distant thunder. From time to time they heard the same sound again as they descended the hill on the other side, passed through the forest and rode up to the notch. It was still early afternoon, but when at last they came out on the other side of the notch—that portal which Mietto used to watch from the castle windows—she saw that the city of Rouchoun and the valley beyond already lay in deep shadow.

Soon they reached the city gates and passed through them. There were many citizens abroad going about their business, but few troubled to turn their heads or look with interest at the two grandly clad ladies and their mounted escort—though, as Mietto well knew, such strangers were a rare sight in Rouchoun. Nor did any seem to notice that one of these ladies was their own young countess, returned after a year of absence.

Lady Héloïse looked with interest at the dark streets

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and gloomy passers-by. "In truth," she said, "yon thin, hungry-looking burghers must feed on vinegar, so sour their faces are!"



Now they had reached the big square in front of the castle. Two servants hastened to draw back the courtyard

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gate and, seeing and recognizing Mietto, they bowed but did not smile. They helped the ladies dismount, and Mietto led Lady Héloïse at once to the big audience hall. There, at this hour, she knew she would find them all dining, her parents and her brothers, with her mother's ladies and Messer Tourbassin at the high table on the dais, and the serving men and maids eating, on one side of the hall, at tables laid on trestles which could be removed when the meal was finished.

As they entered the count and the countess came down to greet them; and Mietto, on seeing her father and mother again, for an instant felt shy and embarrassed. She knelt before them, as Queen Jehanne had counseled her, and begged them to pardon her for having stolen herself away from them without an escort and without having warned them of her going. Her father raised her and held her a moment in his arms, but whether it was from affection or merely to steady her she did not know; and her mother kissed her, but it seemed to Mietto somewhat coldly, on her forehead. Neither said a word of her long absence, but turned their attention to welcoming Lady Héloïse with melancholy formality and giving orders for the comfort of the men-at-arms.

Lady Héloïse they led to the high table and put her in the place of honor at the count's right hand, while Mietto sat down between Louvis and Guibert, who raised their eyes

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from their plates and said: "So you have returned, sister," and then went on with their dinner. The count said a few words of thanks to Lady Héloïse for having escorted his daughter on the long journey from Tarascon, and he begged



her to remain for several days at the castle that he might give a feast in her honor.

But Lady Héloïse, after glancing around the gloomy hall with its dark hangings, and noting the meagerness of the fare spread out on the table, made what excuses she could.

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"The journey has been long," she said, "and at the best 'twill be another moon before I can be in Tarascon again. I needs must set forth early in the morning." And she thought of a certain baronial castle some seven leagues to the southward where she could be sure of finding good cheer and merriment, too.

When the meal was over Mietto had begun to feel less strange. Her spirits rose and twice the countess frowned at her excited voice and happy laugh, for now she was bound to tell them all of her adventures. But first she ran to the entrance hall to fetch her treasures that she had brought from Tarascon and Aix, packed in the saddlebags of the men-at-arms. There was her book of pictures that King René and she had made together of all she had seen on her journeys. There were the kirtles that she had embroidered in beautiful colors under the direction of Queen Jehanne, the silken coif that she had made for her mother, also the gifts that King René had entrusted to her to be given to her parents and her brothers.

For her father there was a clasp made of rock crystal, engraved with twining grapevines, a necklet of precious stones for her mother, and for each of her brothers a dagger with a richly ornamented handle. Her brothers seemed to accept the gifts coldly enough, and Mietto did not notice how every now and then, through the evening, they took out the daggers and surreptitiously felt the keen edges of

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the blades and examined the curious device with which the handles were engraved. Nor did she guess the inward pleasure and pride that her father felt upon receiving the marks of the king's favor. To her his courteous speech, praising the generosity of the king, seemed cold and unappreciative, although he asked the Lady Héloïse in well-chosen words to add his spoken words of thanks to the letter that he would write that night and ask her to bear to King René.

And though her mother praised the even stitches of the seams on the coif and kirtles that Mietto had made, she could not forbear to add: "But in the time that you wasted in placing all these stitches of colored silk you could have hemmed a full dozen table napkins. For, though the design is pleasing in its way, so many bright colors must be hurtful to the eyes."

However Mietto was determined not to be daunted, and she took her book and showed them this picture and that. She did not dwell much on her journey with the jongleurs, for King René had made her understand that her father would scarce have been pleased to know that his daughter had been roaming about the country with strolling players, even though they had taken good care of her. But she described with great enthusiasm the beauties of Aix and Tarascon, the music and the dances and all the splendor of the great festivals. And as she told them of the tourna-

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ment it seemed to her that Louvis, the eldest of her brothers, who was now nineteen winters old and a tall, handsome youth, listened with some interest. But when she met his eye she feared that she was mistaken, for he yawned and shifted his position as if weary.

When at last she talked about her great desire that the count should encourage and help the citizens of Rouchoun to use some of their wealth in making their city beautiful even as Aix and Tarascon, carving statues and pillars for the church, and employing artists to paint them pictures and to color glass as she had seen it in the great cathedral, the count was not encouraging.

"People are not all the same in this world," he said. "Some like one thing and some another. You have lived among those who—perhaps because the fruits of the earth grow in great profusion and there is much sunshine all the year—delight in bright colors, in futile talk and laughing, in music, song and dancing. These diversions would weary others exceedingly, and me among them. A church is a church, and a house a house, and if it is solidly built and does not let in the rain it has served its purpose. Of what use is it, therefore, to add to one's labor and with infinite pains to hack out wood and stone and marble in the semblance of leaves and flowers and figures, or with colored pigments to paint on strips of wood? I fear that here in Rouchoun men must labor too hard, making their crops to

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grow, to have any heart left for needless labor. But I hope, Mietto, that your sojourn in these happier places will not make you discontented with your own home, and that you will not wish to leave us again."

If Mietto's welcome home did not seem to her very warm, perhaps she felt its coldness the more because for so long she had been accustomed to the gay smiles and jesting affection which had surrounded her since she had left the gloomy valley. For I am sure that, if the truth were known, the count and the countess, Louvis, Léoun and Guibert had missed Mietto not a little, and her merry voice and laughter which used to echo through the castle corridors. And perhaps they had expressed their happiness at having her with them again as well as they could—but Mietto found it hard to understand this, having been so long away. I am afraid that it was a discouraged and unhappy little girl that crept into her bed that night. And if she found herself wishing with all her heart that she could return with Lady Héloïse the next morning, who can blame her?

The next day, however, her spirits had risen again and she was up early to bid Lady Héloïse good-by and charge her with many loving messages for King René, Queen Jehanne and Marguerite. After she had watched her ride off, surrounded by the men-at-arms, she wandered for a while rather aimlessly about the castle. Her brothers were

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already in the tower room with Messer Tourbassin, immersed in their chemical experiments. Her father sat in his counting room busy with his accounts; and, when Mietto came in and perched on the arm of his chair, though he smiled at her gravely, she knew that he did not want to be interrupted.

Her mother sat in her chamber surrounded by her ladies, sewing as ever on a piece of dark-colored velvet. When Mietto joined them at their work and began to sing while she sewed—as Queen Jehanne and her ladies were wont to do—one of the merry little songs that Messer Guinoun had taught her, it seemed to her that her mother contracted her eyes as though the noise disturbed her. So Mietto soon left off.

In the afternoon she decided to go to the postern gate and pay a visit to Dame Magala. The strange noise that she had heard on the road to Rouchoun came more frequently now. It certainly seemed strange that thunder should last so long! She stopped at the blacksmith's forge and greeted her old friend, Messer Devous, and asked him what it might mean.

"I do not know," he said, "but it is more than three months since we heard it, first at long intervals, but during the last weeks with ever-growing frequency. The noise seems to come from the great rock, and many say that it is

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the giant who is buried beneath it groaning in his sleep and making ready to rise."

Dame Magala greeted Mietto with great affection, but even this old friend seemed to her eyes now a little more sober than she had remembered her. Dame Magala listened with interest and sympathy to the tale of her adventures, but seemed to agree with the count that the citizens of Rouchoun had not the energy to toil to produce things for the sake of beauty alone.

"The only thing that would bring happiness to Rouchoun," said Dame Magala, "would be to tear it down stone by stone and build it again on some sunny and fertile hillside—then, at last, you might see that the people would learn to dance and make merry again, and enjoy the daily toil and the leisure that follows as much as they do in any other part of Provence."

And touching on Mietto's disappointment at her welcome home, Dame Magala had much to say. "Of course you have been missed, Mietto; but it may be that the long cold winters have served to freeze the hearts of our people so that they cannot express the love that they feel. Even so from time to time I have heard many folk regret your absence and wonder when you would return. 'It is odd,' said one neighbor; 'never have I had word with the little countess; but the sight of her blue eyes and golden hair and the smile, which they say was scarce fitting for a maiden of

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such high degree, was wont to make me feel warm even on the coldest winter's day!

"And as for your father and mother and your brothers, I am sure that they were sad when you departed, though since they always looked sad, few could mark the difference. But on more than one occasion, one of your brothers stopped to visit me in the market place and seemed to take comfort that I should talk of you. And one of the servant wenches at the castle told me that, when the messengers from the king came to tell of your safety, she heard your mother say: 'I much fear me that Mietto will remain at the court now till she is a grown maiden, for then never will I see her as a little child again!'"

Mietto felt a lump rise up in her throat when Dame Magala had told her these things, and suddenly she felt a great desire to run up to the uplands where the sun was shining and to be alone and think. So she said: "How are the goats, Dame Magala? Do you think that they have forgotten me? I would so love to take them up to the pasture, for there will yet be an hour or two of sunlight."

And with Dame Magala's permission, she led them out of the stable and through the postern gate and up the little path through the meager farm lands till once again she stood in the sunlight and watched the goats munch the sere, yellowish grass at the foot of the rock. How different was this pasture land from that on the hill above Tarascon!

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But Mietto suddenly knew that she loved it none the less, she loved the little stunted tufts of gorse and lavender with their tiny blossoms and straggling leaves. And she loved the grim old city down in the valley below her—for after all it was her home and, yes, she was glad to be home again!

She flung off her kirtle and, dressed in her silk smock, she danced once more just as she used to do, surrounded by her goats, and sang a merry tune that she had heard sung by the boatmen on the Rhône. She had not danced long before she heard again the strange thunder-like rumbling; and soon the noise became so great that she had to stop her dancing, for she could not hear her own singing. The goats raised their heads and seemed frightened; they leaped away in all directions, nor would they come when Mietto called them. And now the sun was hidden behind the rock and a cold wind had risen from the north, so Mietto hastily slipped on her kirtle and cape and called the goats again; but they paid no heed to her.

Just as he had always been wont to do, however, the stranger goat appeared when he was needed; he bounded after the straying goats, herded them together and brought them back to Mietto. He almost seemed to push them down the hillside, so great was his haste, and stayed with them only till they reached the edge of the first tilled field; then he turned and fled back up the hill.

The rumbling had grown much louder as they descended

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the slope, and below her, in the outskirts of Rouchoun, Mietto could see the people rushing out of their houses and crossing themselves as they gazed up at the mountain. Suddenly there came a crash that flung her to her knees. When she turned she saw the great Rock of the Giant sway and crumple and crash down into the farther valley, letting the sun fall in a blaze of glorious light on the city of Rouchoun! And in that blaze of sunlight she saw the stranger goat high on the hillside, and his fleece shone like pure gold.

He scaled the hilltop where the great rock had stood, stopped for an instant on the summit to look back at Mietto, then disappeared on the other side to seek his lair in some secret valley. And on the ground at Mietto's feet something sparkled and glittered in the sunlight. She stooped and picked it up—it was a hair of pure gold, the gift of the Golden Goat.

M.O.

